

Gunmen kill 13 civilians in Algeria

PARIS (Agencies) — Attackers using guns, knives and a bomb killed 13 civilians, including an eight-month-old baby, in separate attacks in the Algerian capital and in a village south of Algiers, Algerian newspapers said on Saturday.

Gunmen stormed Oued Zitoun hamlet in Medea province, 70 kilometres south of Algiers, and cut the throats of eight villagers overnight Thursday-Friday, said *Liberte* newspaper.

The newspaper said the assailants shot and wounded nine villagers trying to flee the bloodshed.

Among the dead were four children aged between eight months and 10 years, it said.

In Algiers, gunmen cut the throats of two girls at the Casbah, the old main district in the city, and shot dead a woman in the same area on Thursday, said *Al Khabar* newspaper.

Gunmen set off a bomb at a house in Bab Al Oued district in central Algiers on Friday, killing a couple

and wounding two people, *Liberte* and *Al Khabar* said.

No one claimed responsibility for the killings. The authorities made no comments.

Thousands of civilians have been killed in massacres in the past 11 months mainly in the poor districts of Algiers and nearby towns and villages.

Grisly massacres increased in September and October in the same areas, prompting human rights groups at home and abroad to question the willingness of the army and security forces to protect civilians from more massacres.

Leading human rights organisations abroad asked the international community to probe the massacres in Algeria but the government dismissed the calls as interference in Algeria's internal affairs.

More than 65,000 people have been killed in Algeria's violence since 1992 when the authorities cancelled a general election in which Islamists had taken a com-

manding lead.

20 sentenced to death

In another development on Friday, 20 suspected Islamist guerrillas, on trial in their absence for arms smuggling, were condemned to death by an Algerian court.

Those sentenced include three leaders of Algerian Islamist groups abroad.

Eighteen other people were sentenced to between 18 months and 20 years in prison, while eight others were acquitted over the case, which came from the discovery in 1994 of weapons smuggled in from Europe aboard a state-owned boat and a car at the Algerian-Moroccan border.

Pronouncing the sentences, the court said it believed the arms were destined for the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), considered one of the most violent protagonists in Algeria's five years of bloodshed.

The 20 sentenced to death include Anouar Haddam, a self-appointed

spokesman of the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) political group who is being detained in the United States by immigration authorities.

Others were suspected GIA member Ahmed Zaoui, who is currently in Switzerland where he had requested asylum, and Djamel Lounici, a suspected coordinator of Islamist groups in Europe and an arms smuggler currently held in Italy on a French arrest warrant. Lounici has already been sentenced to death once before by Algeria, in 1993, for a bomb attack on Algiers' international airport.

Another of those condemned to death, an armed militant leader named Said Makhloufi, has been reported already dead by the Algerian press.

A sailor who was said to have confessed to having helped transport the arms was given 15 years in prison. The two people in the car at the border were each given 20 years.



Masked Palestinian activists burn Israeli and American flags as they shout anti-Israeli slogans during a rally in the West Bank city of Nablus Saturday. Palestinians protested against Israel's detention of Palestinian woman Itaf Alayan, who is linked to the Islamist Jihad group and who has been on a hunger strike in an Israeli prison for the last three weeks. Palestinians say her condition is very serious (Reuters photo)

Qatar blames Egypt over cancellation of Doha meeting

DOHA (AFP) — A Qatari newspaper blamed Egypt on Saturday for the cancellation of a meeting between the Gulf Arab states, Egypt and Syria that was scheduled to take place here next month.

The *Al Raya* newspaper, which reflects the view of the Qatari government, accused Egypt of "manipulation," saying it played a key role in getting the meeting cancelled because it was being held in Doha.

A war of words has broken out between Egypt and Qatar over Cairo's criticism of the Middle East economic conference which Doha hosted last week. The forum was boycotted by most Arab countries because of Israel's participation.

A Gulf diplomat said on Friday that the meeting between the so-called Damascus Declaration countries which was due to take place here on Dec. 1st had been called off because of the row.

The diplomat said the meeting of the eight countries — which were united in opposing Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait — was to be postponed until late December or early January.

"Egypt has used pressure against Arab countries to boycott the Doha conference and now it is trying to prevent the staging in Qatar of a declaration of the Damascus Declaration countries," *Al Raya* said. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mosa said on Wednesday that the meeting of the foreign ministers from the eight countries would not take place in Qatar.

Eight Bahraini opposition leaders get jail terms

MANAMA (AFP) — Bahrain's state security court on Saturday sentenced eight leaders of the exiled opposition to between five and 15 years in prison for attempting to overthrow the regime, the official GNA news agency said.

The eight were tried in absentia without defence lawyers in a closed-door trial which opened Nov. 7.

Five Bahrainis — Mansour Jamri, Said Shehawi, Adel Shuala, Khalil Sultan and Mohammad Mansour — were each sentenced to 15 years jail and were fined \$13,500, GNA reported.

Five-year prison terms were handed down to three others, Sheikh Ali Salman, Sheikh Hamza Diri and Sheikh Haider Siri.

The first six defendants were also ordered to pay a total of around \$15 million for damaging public property, GNA said.

The verdicts of the security court cannot be appealed. Bahrain charged the eight of "incitement to acts of sabotage," "spying for a foreign country," leading an illegal organisation named "Hizbollah-Bahrain," and "propagating false and hostile rumours of a sort likely to harm the general interests of the coun-

try," the Bahrain media has reported.

Sheikh Salman, Sheikh Diri and Sheikh Siri, Mr. Jamri and Mr. Shehawi all live in exile in Britain. Mr. Jamri is the spokesman for the London-based Bahrain Freedom Movement and Mr. Shehawi a member of the group.

The whereabouts of the other three defendants are not known.

The charge sheet does not specify which foreign country the accused are alleged to have worked for. But in June 1996 Bahraini authorities accused Iran of seeking to overthrow them by financing the so-called "Hizbollah-Bahrain."

Iran rejected the accusation and denied any knowledge of the existence of any such organisation.

The five defendants in London said last month they had not been notified of the trial, a charge denied by the Bahraini authorities.

Sheikh Salman's arrest in December 1994 prompted riots against the government which continue intermittently to this day. Thirty-eight people have been killed in the unrest.

The opposition is campaigning for the restoration of Bahrain's parliament, which was dissolved in 1975 by Emir Sheikh Isa Ben Salman Khalifa.

Lebanon marks independence day with call for Israel's withdrawal

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon on Saturday marked its 54th anniversary of independence on Saturday amid calls for Israel to withdraw from occupied southern territory and heightened concern over the country's economic woes.

Lebanese President Elias Hrawi, Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and Parliamentary Speaker Nabih Berri attended a military parade in Beirut, along with a high-ranking delegation from the Syrian army, which maintains a 35,000 strong force on three-quarters of Lebanon's territory.

In a national address Friday evening, President Hrawi deplored "international laxity" toward "daily aggression" by Israel, which has refused to comply with a U.N. Security Council resolution requiring its unconditional withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

"The general mobilisation against Iraq should not make [anyone] forget the international responsibility to mobilise against Israel's persistence in continuing its aggression," he said.

Israel has maintained a self-declared "security zone" in southern Lebanon since 1985 to protect its northern territory from cross-border attacks.

Mr. Hrawi devoted a large part of his address to Lebanon's economic crisis as it struggles to rebuild after the 1975-1990 civil war, saying that "solving the economic problems is difficult."

"In 16 years of war, Lebanon lost \$30 billion according to the World Bank," he said.

Mr. Hrawi also said that "the basis of a solution should be rapidly laid down" and underlined the necessity for a "global programme of reforms," particularly administrative. "Democracy is no cover for corruption" and diversion

of public funds, he added.

Mr. Hariri and Mr. Berri met several times last week to try to establish a reform plan to reduce expenses, launch administrative reforms, and reabsorb part of the public debt.

The state finance minister, Fuad Saniora, recently said that if Lebanon's national debt, which was more than \$10 billion at the end of 1996, is not controlled, it will continue to rise steadily, eroding buying power and increasing social problems.

Lebanese independence, proclaimed in 1941 while the country was administered by France under a League of Nations mandate, was confirmed in 1943.

The country's independence was not fully effective until the withdrawal of French troops in 1946 following a series of national uprisings.

Egyptian, Swiss survivors of Luxor massacre say they played dead

CAIRO (R) — An Egyptian and a Swiss who survived a Islamist massacre at the tourist town of Luxor escaped with their lives by playing dead, state security investigators said on Saturday.

The investigators are trying to piece together the bloody events outside Queen Hatshepsut's Temple in Luxor last Monday when six assailants shot and killed 58 foreign tourists and four Egyptians.

Local guard Mohammed Marei Mahmoud, 32, told investigators he walked over to one of the temple entrances to drink a cup of tea with another guard, a policeman and the temple's ticket vendor when four men walked through.

The men were wearing civilian clothes, Mr. Marei said. Some witnesses have told police the Luxor gunmen wore police uniforms.

When Mr. Marei asked the first of the men for their

tickets, the man pointed to the other three behind him who opened fire with their weapons, shooting Mr. Marei in the leg.

The guard said the policeman tried to pull his pistol out but the three gunmen opened fire at random.

"The policeman, the ticket vendor and the guard fell on top of me and I pretended to be dead," investigators quoted Mr. Marei.

He said the gunmen kept on shooting for about 15 minutes, after which he ran to hide in a nearby tomb until locals came to tell him it was safe to come out.

Mr. Marei said he believed other gunmen took part in the attack because he heard shots being fired at another temple entrance.

The interior ministry said six gunmen were behind the assault and that they were all killed.

Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah (Islamic group) claimed responsibility for the slay-

ing. It was their biggest and deadliest attack since they took up arms in 1992 to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak's government and install a strict Islamic state.

A Swiss tourist told investigators he was inside the temple along with a group of compatriots when three men wearing police uniforms approached them.

"I thought they were coming to protect us because we had heard shots in another part of the temple. One of them told us in English to go to a corner. I noticed they were pointing weapons at us and I told my friends in German they were terrorists," investigators quoted the unnamed tourist as saying.

He was interviewed on Thursday night and has since flown back to Switzerland.

The tourist told investigators he was shot on the right side of his body when the gunmen opened fire.

"Two people fell on top

of me and I pretended to be dead. That's what saved me. I heard shots for 10 minutes," he said.

Security sources said a witness in Luxor told prosecutors there that he saw six men wearing civilian clothes over police uniforms get off a truck taxi, pay the fare and approach Hatshepsut's Temple.

The witness said four of the men entered, while two remained behind. Shots were heard inside the temple area soon after. The two men outside the temple then opened fire on two policemen. It is not clear if one or both policemen died.

Mr. Mubarak has replaced his interior minister and promised to boost security at tourist sites in a bid to control damage to Egypt's lucrative tourism industry.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:10 Little Rosey
14:30 Jonny Quest
14:50 The Magic School Bus
15:00 Energy Express
15:30 American Chart Show
16:30 Tarzan
17:00 French Programmes
19:00 News in French
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00 Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
20:30 Hot Shots
21:10 Renegade
22:00 News in English
22:30 The Bourne Identity
23:15 The Jewel in the Crown

PRAYER TIMES

04:45 Fajr
06:06 (Sunrise) Duha
11:22 Dhuhur
14:13 'Asr
16:38 Maghreb
17:58 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 637440.		Min./Max. temp.	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.	Amman	09/20	
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366	Aqaba	16/25	
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.	Deserts	06/21	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.	Jordan Valley	15/26	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.	Yesterday's high temperatures:		
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.	Amman 19, Aqaba 25	Humidity	
Armenian International Church Tel. 5516245	readings: Amman 47 per cent,	Aqaba 40 per cent.	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.	USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS		
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404.	NIGHT DUTY		
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.	AMMAN:		
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.	Dr. Mazen Nahi 830435		
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295	Dr. Fakher Bilbeisi 5522233		
English-speaking	Dr. Adnan Zaghloul 398140		
Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.	Dr. Fayez Dabbas 759155		
	Firas pharmacy 661912		
	Ferdous pharmacy 778336		
	Al Asema pharmacy 637055		
	Nairoukh pharmacy 623672		
	Al Salam pharmacy 636730		
	Yacoub pharmacy 644945		
	Shmeisani pharmacy 637660		
	Najib pharmacy 847632		
	IRBID:		
	Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484		
	Al Quds pharmacy (—)		
ZARQA:		HOSPITALS	
Dr. Zuhour Al Qadi 906606		AMMAN:	
Khalifeh pharmacy 98541		Hussein Medical Centre 81381332	
EMERGENCIES		Khalidi Maternity 642281/6	
Food Control Centre 637111		Alkheh Maternity 643441/2	
Civil Defence Department 661111		Jabal Amman Maternity 642362	
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341		Malhas, J. Amman 636140	
Civil Defence Emergency 199		Palestine, Shmeisani 607071	
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777		Shmeisani Hospital 669131	
Fire Brigade 617101		University Hospital 845845	
Blood Bank 775121		Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9	
Highway Police 843402		The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37	
Traffic Police 896390		Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6	
Public Security Dept. 630321		Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3	
Hotel Complaints 605800		Al-Bashir 775111/26	
Price Complaints 661176		Army, Marka 891611/15	
Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467		Queen Alia Hospital 602340/50	
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111		Amal Hospital 674155	
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121		The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199	
Overseas Calls 010230		ZARQA:	
Central Amman Telephone		Govt. Hospital	
Repairs 778336		Zarqa National Hospital	
Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101		(09900560)	
Jordan Television 773111		Ibn Sina Hospital (09986732)	
Radio Jordan 774111		Al Hikma Modern Hospital	
Water Authority 680100		(09990990)	
J. Electricity Authority 815615		IRBID:	
Electric Power Co. 636381		Princess Basma Hospital	
RJ Flight Information 08-53200		(02127555)	
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200		Greek Catholic Hospital	
		(02127275)	
		Ibn Al Nafes Hospital	

	11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
	12:15 London (RJ)
	12:20 Athens (RJ)
..... Vienna (RJ)	15:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
.....dah (add) (RJ)	20:10 Cairo (RJ)
..... Frankfurt (RJ)	20:50 Jeddah (RJ)
..... Cairo (RJ)	20:30 New Delhi (RJ)
	21:00 Dubai (RJ)
	22:00 Damascus (RJ)
..... Rome (AZ)	22:30 Bangkok (RJ)
..... Sanaa (IY)	22:45 Sanaa (RJ)
..... Bahrain (GF)	23:00 Jakarta (RJ)
..... Moscow (SU)	23:50 Abu Dhabi, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
..... Doha (QR)	
..... Jeddah (SV)	Other Flights
..... Tel Aviv (LY)	03:00 Athens (OA)
..... Beirut (ME)	04:20 Rome (AZ)
..... Cairo (MS)	06:15 Beirut (ME)
..... Istanbul (TK)	06:40 Beirut, London (BA)
	07:50 London (BA)
	11:00 Sanaa (IY)
..... Aqaba (RW)	13:15 Doha (GF)
..... QAIA) (RW)	14:50 Moscow (SU)
..... Airport) (RW)	15:55 Doha (QR)
..... Tel Aviv (RW)	19:15 Jeddah (SV)
..... QAIA) (RW)	21:20 Tel Aviv (LY)
..... Aqaba (RW)	21:40 Cairo (MS)
..... Airport) (RW)	
	Royal Wings (RW)
	06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
	08:15 Aqaba (RW)
	09:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
	16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
	17:55 Tel Aviv (RW)
	20:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
	21:50 Aqaba (RW)

RES

RJ Flights

..... Beirut (RJ)

..... Vienna (RJ)

..... Frankfurt (RJ)

..... Casablanca (RJ)

Royal Wings (RW)

06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

08:15 Aqaba (RW)

09:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)

16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

17:55 Tel Aviv (RW)

20:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)

21:50 Aqaba (RW)

Seminar on details of Jordan-EU agreement to open here tomorrow

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A seminar on the "ins and outs" of the Euro-Jordanian Association Agreement will open here Monday, shortly following the signing of the agreement in Brussels.

Ramon Mestres, economic counsellor at the European Commission (EC), said the objective of the seminar, hosted jointly by the Jordan Businessmen Association (JBA) and the EC, is to "allow the Jordanian private sector to acquire increased knowledge of the agreement, its implications, opportunities and challenges."

JBA Chairman Hamdi Tabba said the "feeling among most businessmen is that there is a lack of knowledge about the contents and the impact of this agreement on the economy."

"The seminar is expected to open a channel for dialogue between the private sector and the concerned parties to reach a level of awareness and get more information about the agreement," he explained.

Two main themes will be highlighted at the seminar: the general outline of the Euro-Jordanian Association agreement and intellectual property rights and the impact of the agreement on particular sectors.

The agreement is the outcome of what is known as the "Barcelona process," initiated in 1994 by the 15 EU member states and the Mediterranean countries to enhance economic partnership, a main pillar of the resulting Barcelona Declaration.

Mr. Mestres said that the idea of partnership will "substitute the original philosophy of donor and recipient and introduce a high, demanding idea of association."

The association agreement, which has been under negotiation for nearly two years, includes articles concerning the establishment of a free trade area and political dialogue, as well as enlarged cooperation in the cultural, social, and human resource sectors.

Additionally, it lays out new standards for intellectual property rights and rules of origin for Jordanian exports. It will be signed Monday by Minister of Foreign Affairs Fayez Tarawneh and the foreign affairs ministers of the EU's 15 member states.

Both local and European experts on the agreement's various aspects will discuss the main features of intellectual property rights with reference to the agreement. The agreement's effect on the tourism, pharmaceutical, and agricultural sectors and rules of origin and Jordan's access to the World Trade Organisation.

Among speakers from Jordan are Mr. Tabba, Commissioner of the Jordan Securities Commission Tayseer Abdul Jabbar, Deputy Chairman of the Arab Banking Corporation Jawad Hadid, Secretary General of the Ministry of Industry and Trade Mohammad Halaiga, and Director of the Aid Coordination Unit/Director of Technical Support Unit at the Ministry of Planning Youssef Mansour.

Bernard Philippe, Garrick Aird, and John Taylor, experts on customs and taxation, tourism development, and rules of origin, respectively, will also be addressing the seminar.

Next year's state budget focus of regular Cabinet meeting

AMMAN (J.T.) — The 1998 state budget was the focus of discussions during the regular Cabinet session Saturday, according to Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi.

Speaking after the Council of Ministers' session, he said the ministers conducted a first reading of the draft and expressed hope that the budget would be ready by the end of next week.

Referring to the visit to Jordan by Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, Dr. Mutawi said the Iraqi official is coming here as part of a tour of Arab states to discuss developments in the Iraq-U.N. crisis over the issue of weapons inspection teams.

The Cabinet also heard a report on the outcome of

the Middle East and North Africa economic conference in Doha, according to Dr. Mutawi.

He said Jordan will attend the upcoming Organisation of Islamic Conference summit to be held in Tehran from Dec. 9-11, but no decision has been taken yet on who will lead the Jordanian delegation.

The Council of Ministers

approved an agreement on a \$10 million grant from Oman, which will be paid to Jordan in three installments over a period of five months.

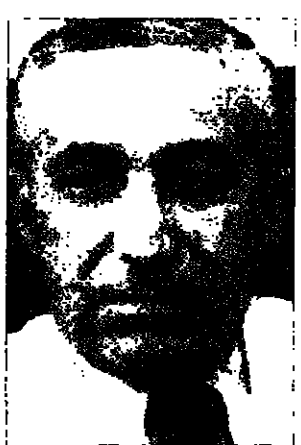
The Cabinet formed Jordan's delegation to the third meeting on climate changes, due to open in Japan on Dec. 1, and another delegation to attend the meeting of Arab justice ministers in Cairo.

Mediation committee begins negotiations between health professionals, ministry

By Odeh Odeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A mediation committee has initiated contacts between public sector health professionals and the Ministry of Health and Medical Care to reach a settlement in their dispute on allowances and better work conditions.

The committee, chaired by former Health Minister Zuhair Malhas, met with Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi Friday in a preliminary session to attempt to reach a compromise in this dispute, which had prompted the dentists, doctors, and pharmacists working in government hospitals and health cen-



Former Health Minister Zuhair Malhas (File photo)

tries to stage several small strikes. Basem Dajani, the spokesperson for the

health professionals, last week said the health professionals decided to suspend their work stoppage action in order to give the mediation committee sufficient time to reach an agreement with the government.

Dr. Dajani, who is also president of the Jordan Medical Association (JMA), said the professionals will meet with the newly-elected members of the Lower House of Parliament to explain their demands but gave no dates.

After the preliminary meeting with Dr. Kurdi, Dr. Malhas said the meeting was cordial and held in a favourable atmosphere. He added that the committee will hold a

series of meetings with the minister in order to reach a final solution that will safeguard the interests of all parties.

Dr. Kurdi said the government's door will remain open to the mediation committee, whose efforts to ensure uninterrupted work by the health professionals are appreciated.

Apart from Dr. Malhas, the committee comprises the following physicians: former health ministers Zeid Hamzeh and Adnan Jaljoul, Hassan Khreis, secretary general of the Arab Doctors Union, and former JMA presidents Ishaq Farhan, Fuad Kilani, and Musallam Qasem.

Texas Tech delegation reviews academic cooperation with University of Jordan officials

AMMAN (J.T.) — A delegation from Texas Tech University in the U.S. Saturday held talks with senior University of Jordan (UJ) officials at the outset of their visit to the Kingdom.

UJ President Fawzi Gharaibeh received the American delegation, which is headed by Donald Haragan, the Texas Tech president. The two sides reviewed bilateral cooperation in scientific and academic fields and means of further developing them.

Also discussed was the exchange of expertise in several fields. Dr. Gharaibeh and Dr. Haragan discussed the role of the University of Jordan in teaching Arabic at Texas Tech.

The delegation also met with Dean of the Higher Education Faculty Lewis Mukaratash, with whom they held talks on exchanging higher education programmes and charting plans of study.



UJ President Fawzi Gharaibeh, Texas Tech President Donald Haragan, and delegation member Mohammad Maqqousi Saturday discuss cooperation between the two schools in several fields (Photo by Youssef Allan)

NEWS IN BRIEF

King congratulates Lebanese president on independence day

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein sent a cable to Lebanese President Elias Hrawi congratulating him on behalf of the Jordanian government and people on the Lebanese independence day. King Hussein wished Mr. Hrawi good health and continued happiness and the Lebanese people prosperity and further development.

Officers honoured for part in capturing would-be assassins

AMMAN (Petra) — Public Security Department (PSD) Director General Nasouh Muhieddin Saturday honoured two police officers for their

efforts in apprehending the assailants of Khaled Misha'al. The officers were As'ad Na'eem Khatib and Mohammad Abu Seif.

Workshop on use of isotopes in water resources opens tomorrow

AMMAN (Petra) — The Water Authority, in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), will hold a regional workshop Monday on the uses of radioactive isotopes in water resources. Water Authority Undersecretary for Technical Affairs Raja Jad'oun said the four-day workshop will focus on papers and studies carried out in the region. Dr. Jad'oun said researchers from Lebanon, Egypt, Oman,

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Jordan are taking part.

Part of electric linkage between Jordan, Egypt to be completed by year's end

CAIRO (Petra) — Egyptian Minister of Electricity and Energy Maher Abaza Saturday said the electric grid between several Mediterranean countries will play an important role in the economies of the region. In a statement to the press, Mr. Abaza said the first step of the electric linkage between Jordan and Egypt is expected to be completed by the end of 1997.

New 11-member bloc in Parliament formed

AMMAN (Petra) — A new parliamentary bloc was formed Saturday under the name of "Democratic Solidarity."

The new bloc includes deputies Sa'd Hayel Srou, Ghaleb Zou'bi, Hamad Abu Zeid, Barjis Hadid, Fawzi Tueimeh, Abdullah Zureikat, Ghazi Fayez, Munir Sobar, Nayef Moulia, Saleh Jbour, Sami Khasawneh, Fawaz Zou'bi, Bakhit Manayeh, Youssef Shreidah, Mansour Ben Tarif, and Ahmad Ajarmeh.

The 11-member bloc will hold a meeting Monday to announce its new members and its position on the Lower House presidency elections.

Meanwhile, the "Al Wifaq" parliamentary bloc held a meeting with the attendance of 13 out of its 20 members and reviewed their policy on the upcoming session.

During the meeting, Deputy Abdul Hadi Majali was elected president, Hashem Faouri as secretary, and Abdullah Jazi as the bloc's spokesperson.

The "National Bloc" is scheduled to hold a meeting today to discuss its parliamentary agenda.

Crown Prince invites British investors to capitalise on new opportunities in Kingdom

(Continued from page 1)

96 per cent. Inflation during 1997 is forecast at four per cent... and the stability of the dinar exchange rate has been maintained.

The Crown Prince allayed concerns that the size of the Jordanian market made foreign investment in the country unfeasible.

"It should be stated that in addition to our association with the EU, we have recently, at Doha, concluded an agreement on the so-called Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ). This provides Jordanian-Israeli joint ventures free access to the U.S. market. Trilateral joint ventures with U.K. investors can, in this way, have free access for their products not only to local markets, but also to the USA and EU. This unique feature should be tapped immediately."

"As we approach the final stages in the peace-making process, planting the seeds for peace build-

ing was very much on our mind," he told his audience.

The Crown Prince, who will witness the signing of the association agreement in Brussels tomorrow, told chamber members that the UK's assumption in January of the EU presidency "augurs well for the launch of [Jordan's] partnership with Europe."

"Traditional ties of cooperation between Jordan and Britain will surely provide a solid foundation for our new relationship with Europe," he said.

Prince Hassan said that "[the Middle East's] prosperity depends on regional and international politics."

"The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, as well as Jordan's Association with the European Club are surely the most important building blocks for evolving security, cooperation and civilised code of conduct in the Middle East."

The Crown Prince also expressed concern for the humanitarian crisis in Iraq saying that a time frame

for lifting sanctions should be established.

"I just like to point out very clearly, that the Russian initiative that has been received in Geneva by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and (British) Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, included an urgency in terms of the technical point, in terms of transparency and in terms of timing. It is saying very clearly to start an end within a specific time frame."

"There is a feeling among the people that sanctions will go on forever," he said. "This is untenable. Security is about involving people."

"There is a need for constructive thinking to address the situation in Iraq, in all its aspects, and end the suffering of the Iraqi people," he said.

Also attending the event were Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath, His Royal Highness Prince Faisal and Sir Brian Jenkins.

Security Council meets to discuss UNSCOM's recommendations offering 'little concessions'

(Continued from page 1)

certifies that all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, biological, chemical and long-range missiles — have been dismantled.

The commissioners repeated that Iraq must provide the U.N. inspectors with full, unconditional and immediate access to all sites they wish to visit, and blamed Baghdad for any

delays in their work.

In another small concession to Russia, the commissioners noted that "additional aerial surveillance, with additional aircraft, could enhance UNSCOM effectiveness, including night surveillance, if possible."

This was an indirect reference to Iraqi charges that a U.S. spy plane, loaned to UNSCOM, was working for Washington. Iraq has

threatened to shoot down the U-2 and Russia on Friday called for reconnaissance planes from other countries to be used on a rotation basis.

The United States insists that the crisis will only be resolved when Iraq cooperates fully with the inspectors tracking down Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

Iraq has consistently denied access to the inspec-

tors in recent months, and Mr. Butler has expressed the fear that Baghdad may have profited from the three-week pause in inspections to step up production of banned biological and chemical weaponry.

One uncertainty remained on Saturday — how the Iraqi president would react after Russia failed to deliver on its promise to speed the lifting of sanctions.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FIFTH JORDANIAN THEATRE FESTIVAL

* Two plays entitled "The House of Grief" and "The Last Tale of Shahrazad" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., respectively.

TWELFTH ITALIAN FILM WEEK

* Two films entitled "Buon Natale, Buon Anno" (Merry Christmas, Happy New Year) and "Lo specchio delle meraviglie" (Through the Wonder Glass), with subtitles in English, at Samir Al Rifa'i auditorium, University of Jordan at 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., respectively.

EXHIBITIONS

* Paintings by Saadi Al-Kaabi at Orient Gallery (Tel. 681303/4), until Dec. 4.

* Exhibitions of prints by Algerian artist Rashid Koraisi and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Hassan Mas'oudi at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh until Dec. 31.

Also displaying paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz and works by contemporary Arab artists.

* "Portrait '97" — works by over thirty Arab artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheina, until Nov. 30.

* Works by Khalid Khreis at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 10.

* Exhibition of wallhangings and weavings by Bashir Kathem and others at Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra Street (Tel. 6991312) until Dec. 4.

* "Journey Within" by Pakistani artist Gulgee and his son, sculptor Amin Gulgee, at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (Tel. 630128), until Dec. 15.

* Bani Hamida fall exhibition "Encounter" (displaying rugs designed by Japanese textile designer Tomoko Iyoda) at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman, until Nov. 25 (Tel. 658696/7).

* Exhibition of wicker accessories from Wadi Rayan, handicrafts and gift items at the Jordan Rivers Designs showroom (Tel. 613081), until Nov. 23.

French Socialists stress unity at congress

BREST, France (R) — France's Socialist Party, catapulted to power in last June's snap general election, holds a national congress this weekend aimed at building on Lionel Jospin's strong start as prime minister.

The party, which governs in a coalition with Greens and Communists, has shown itself unusually united as it prepared for the two days of debate in the Atlantic port of Brest.

With "realism of the left" as their slogan, the Socialists hope Brest will mark the beginning of a "new era" in which the party works together to support Mr. Jospin rather than slide back into the bickering that has weakened it in the past.

"It's a new era that's starting," Francois Hollande, the designated new leader of the party, told Reuters.

"Party unity must be respected, and at the same time the party has to continue what it does best, that is to produce ideas," said Mr. Hollande who will succeed Mr. Jospin as first secretary of the party after the congress.

"I want the Socialist Party to be useful, both for the left and the country."

The PS, as the party is known in French, has not always been as useful as it can be now. Under the late President Francois Mitterrand, the party was split into several rival factions and seemed to have lost its way.

Only one issue — France's shortage of jobs —

threatened the smooth running of the congress.

About a thousand people demonstrated Friday outside the Brest conference centre where the Socialist congress is being held, to protest against job insecurity and France's 12.5 per cent unemployment.

Brest has been particularly hard hit due to job cuts at its shipyards triggered by cuts in the state defence budget.

Mr. Hollande told the protesters he would meet trade union representatives later to discuss the jobless issue. Despite the unemployment problem overshadowing the economy, the "red-pink-green" coalition which Mr. Jospin put together after winning the early elections called by conservative President Jacques Chirac has had some successes.

It pulled off what its conservative predecessor did not dare — trimming the state budget to ensure France would qualify for Europe's planned single currency under Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).

After nearly six months in power, a CSA opinion poll published Friday in the daily Le Parisien said Mr. Jospin remained popular, with 61 per cent of people voicing confidence in him to 39 per cent who did not.

His protégé Hollande, 43, has displayed the same mix of pragmatism and left-wing values that has made Mr. Jospin far more popular than conservative Alain Juppe, the technocratic prime minister swept away

by the early poll.

His package of draft policy motions for the congress to approve won a startling 85 per cent support in pre-congress meetings of local socialist organisations around the country.

"This is the first time in a long time that there has been such a large majority in the Socialist Party," a senior party official, Jean-Christophe Cambadélis, said after the results were announced Monday.

"There is now a stable majority in the party, something we lost in the early 1990s," he added.

While Mr. Hollande's resolutions are neither government policy nor binding on Mr. Jospin, they reflect the opinion of the main party in the French government.

They echo the government's determination to put jobs at the top of its agenda and support Italy and Spain in their bid to join the first wave of EMU.

Two sensitive EMU topics that raise deep suspicions in Germany — the French proposal for an "economic government" as a counterpart to the European Central Bank, and questions about the value of the future euro currency against the U.S. dollar — are also mentioned as "objects for negotiation within the community."

The resolutions also firmly support the reduced 35-hour work week already decided by the government amid howls of protest from business, and declare the party's goal is a four-day work week.



Bosnian Serb soldiers register at a polling station in Pale outside Sarajevo (Reuters photo)

Bosnian Muslims vote in Bosnian Serb elections

SARAJEVO (AFP) — Muslims who were "ethnically cleansed" from Serb-held areas in Bosnia voted Saturday in weekend polls for a Bosnian Serb parliament, sceptical that their votes would be enough to change the hostile climate of the region.

Out of the 1.1 million people who registered to vote for the parliament of the Serb-run Republika Srpska — half of post-war Bosnia — many are Muslims and Croats now living as displaced people in the Muslim-Croat Federation — which makes up the other half of the country.

"I am voting because I believe that is the way for me to return home," said Saima Salan, 61, who voted in Vogosca, a Sarajevo suburb now populated mostly with Muslims forced to flee from elsewhere in the country.

Ms. Salan, who was expelled by Serb forces in

1992 from the eastern town of Rogatica, was nevertheless sceptical the improvement would happen soon.

"I will die before the time for return comes but I came to vote today because our people that we elect to represent us could help the process," she said.

Of 83 deputies elected in the country's first post-war elections in September 1996, 17 were Muslims and one a Croat, with the rest Serbs. The current elections were called to attempt to settle a feud between hardliners, who dominated the last parliament and opposed the return of refugees and the more pro-Western Bosnian Serb president, Biljana Plavsic.

Ms. Salan was among those refugees who decided to cast an absentee ballot in stations in Sarajevo that recorded rather a low turnout in the first hour, not helped by below zero temperatures.

Some 350 people, mostly

men, gathered to be bussed to eastern Bosnia to vote in person.

Omer Zunic, 70, from Visegrad said he had voted in the same way in the local polls this September because the Serbs "should see we are still here and alive."

"Of course I want to return but I doubt it will go that easy since the Serbs are not allowing it. They do not respect any political deal but nevertheless we will not stop voting," he said.

Mr. Zunic was sceptical that current rift among the Serb leadership would improve the prospects for refugee return.

"I don't trust Plavsic, she is just as much a nationalist as (former Bosnian Serb President Radovan) Karadzic," Mr. Zunic said. "And generally all Serb parties have same programmes. They always say it is their republic and they always advocate ethnic purity," he added.

Mandela honours Suharto, reports 'progress' on E. Timor

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — President Nelson Mandela Saturday bestowed South Africa's highest award on visiting Indonesian President Suharto and reported "good progress" in discussions on the prickly East Timor issue.

At a short ceremony at his official Genadendal home here, Mr. Mandela presented Mr. Suharto with the Order of Good Hope medal in recognition of his "invaluable contribution to the promotion of friendly and mutually beneficial relations between South Africa and Indonesia."

Indonesia, he added, had supported his African National Congress in its anti-apartheid struggle and had strictly applied sanctions against the former white minority South African government.

In a brief statement, Mr. Suharto repeated statements he has made to the media throughout his three-day state visit to South Africa: that Indonesia and South Africa should co-operate to help set up a world order "based on independence, peace and enduring social justice."

The ceremony wound up Mr. Suharto's visit, which was focused in the Cape Town area and in the course of which bilateral trade and aviation agreements were signed between South Africa and Indonesia.

The visit was criticised by a number of political groups as well as the labour federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which staged pickets and protests against Indonesia's occupation of East Timor.

Mr. Mandela defended his decision to honour Mr. Suharto, saying he was prepared to speak to his leader, "no matter what his record."

Mr. Suharto was due soon later Saturday to leave for Vancouver, Canada, for the



Indonesian President Mohamed Suharto (left) and South African President Nelson Mandela stroll away from the cameras in Cape Town after Mr. Mandela presented Mr. Suharto with the Order of Good Hope (Gold Class), South Africa's highest award (AFP photo)

fifth Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting on Nov. 24-25.

Speaking to reporters after the ceremony, Mr. Mandela said would try later Saturday to contact U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan to brief him on his discussions with Mr. Suharto on East Timor, which Indonesia invaded in 1975 and annexed the following year.

"I am going to try to speak to (Annan) this afternoon and warn him that I'm sending a very confidential document to him reporting on my discussions with President Suharto," Mr. Mandela said, without giving details.

"I have not the slightest doubt that we have made good progress with President Suharto in addressing the difficult and sensitive issue of East Timor," he added.

"And this is all that concerns me, that we should continue to have breakthroughs," Mr. Mandela said, adding that it was crucial the nature of the talks should remain confidential. He said he had been acting in his meetings with Mr. Suharto on behalf of Mr.

Annan and it was necessary first to brief the U.N. chief before any public statement could be made.

The South African leader had been expected to renew his call on Mr. Suharto to release jailed East Timorese rebel leader Xanana Gusmao.

Mr. Gusmao was head of the Fretilin independence movement from 1979 until his arrest in the East Timorese capital of Dili in late 1992. He is currently serving a 20-year term in prison in Jakarta for plotting against the state and for illegal possession of firearms.

Mr. Mandela, who is calling for multi-party talks to end the East Timor impasse, believes all role players should be free to sit around the table to discuss the issue — as happened in South Africa's negotiation between 1990 and 1994 of a power-sharing deal that ended apartheid.

The 79-year-old South African statesman held talks with Mr. Gusmao during a state visit to Indonesia in July and later called for his release. Mr. Suharto has not publicly responded to the call.

Staid images outshine modern icons in new Britain

LONDON (R) — Cool Britannia step aside. Most Britons still prefer the traditional menu of roast beef, prim royals and Charles Dickens to all the cultish, creative images linked to the London of the late 1990s, according to a survey published Sunday.

Be it the Beatles bearing Oasis, Laura Ashley out-fashioning Vivienne Westwood or Morris Dancers outmanoeuvring the Spice Girls, Britain has confirmed itself to be a country of fuddy-duddies.

"Britons are precisely what everyone has supposed them to be: A nation of traditionalists," according to the Daily Telegraph, which commissioned the Gallup poll.

British society has undergone a mini-revolution in the 1990s as its creative talents helped turn London into the most happening city in the world.

From film makers to bands, fashion designers to chefs, new talent has rejuvenated a nation that was ambivalent about its place in the new world order.

Even Queen Elizabeth, the epitome of old-fashioned British reserve, detected "an air of confidence in this country of ours" in a speech this week.

Yet the Gallup poll found most people still think images associated with the old Britain are more persuasive in promoting Britain's image. It polled 1,011 people, asking them to compare pairs of names, images or phrases that reflected both Great Britain and cool Britannia.

The Queen Mother, matri-

arch of the monarchy, scored 70 per cent against 28 per cent for working mother Cherie Blair, wife of the charismatic new Labour prime minister.

Indeed, it was the election of the Labour government in May that helped propel Britain forward as a party run by a clique of 40-somethings promised economic and social shake-up after two decades of Conservative rule.

Yet Britons, while eager for political change, are doggedly loyal to old icons in a fast-changing world. "Old beats modern by a wide margin. The verdict in most cases is emphatic," said the paper.

So Jane Austen, whose works are parroted in classrooms and televised ad-infinitum, easily outstripped modern diarist Bridget Jones, whose log dwells on cigarettes, calories, sex and alcohol.

Country Life magazine, bible of the landed gentry, scored 68 per cent against 24 per cent for loaded, lewd magazine for "new lads" with attitude.

Even curry, which wafes over every high street, scored a poor 16 per cent against the traditional Sunday roast of "meat and two veg", which polled 82 per cent.

Country homes, village pubs, Lord's cricket ground and beefeater guards: all outscored their 1990s rivals. In the few exceptions, warm beer lost out to cold lager and Richard Branson's thoroughly modern Virgin Company just pipped the posh people's store, Harrods.

Quake death toll rises to 6 as Bangladesh rocked by more tremors

CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh (AFP) — The death toll from an earthquake which struck this southeast port city rose to six Saturday, with at least 11 people still missing as a strong aftershock was felt.

Police said they were trying to retrieve two bodies trapped under the debris of a five-storey building which partially collapsed in Friday's tremor, estimated by the Hong Kong observatory to be six on the Richter scale.

Four dead and 10 injured, all hit by falling debris, were recovered from the site Friday. Residents and police said a short, sharp jolt Saturday morning caused panic in the city, but there were no reports of further serious damage. Troops were called in late Friday to help

clear the debris and rescue trapped victims from the original tumbler.

Two floors of the five-storey building sank into the ground in the quake and cracks appeared in several other buildings. Friday's tremor was also felt in nearby Cox's Bazar, a tourist resort town, the capital Dhaka, and Barisal district in southern Bangladesh, weather officials said, adding it lasted for about eight seconds.

Officials said its epicentre was located some 135 kilometres northeast of here near Bangladesh's frontier with Indian Mizoram and Tripura states. Friday's tremor was the 13th to strike Bangladesh in the past eight months. Previous earthquakes caused almost no major damage or casualties.

Hong Kong's new airport may face opening delay — report

HONG KONG (AFP) — The opening of Hong Kong's new airport may be postponed for two months until next June when the airport railway comes into service, press reports said Saturday.

The South China Morning Post quoted sources as saying the airport authority was rethinking the scheduled opening date of next April after the railway builders, the Mass Transit Railway Corporation (MTRC), made it clear it could not open the line by then. The paper quoted the source as saying a final decision would be taken next month, with members of the authority divided on whether to stick to the original timetable.

The new airport at Chek Lap Kok, built on a largely man-made island off the coast of outlying Lantau Island, will be linked to the central business district by road and a

34-kilometre railway. The government had said several times that it planned to open the airport next April even if the railway line was incomplete.

Nicholas Ng, secretary for transport, told legislators last month: "It remains the target of the government and the airport authority to open the new airport at Chek Lap Kok in April 1998."

The MTRC reportedly admitted that the construction delay was due to last year's wage dispute involving foreign workers.

The railway will take travellers from centre to the new airport in 23 minutes.

The cost of the 10 airport core projects, including the world's longest road and rail suspension bridge, is estimated at more than \$20 billion and is one of the world's biggest civil engineering projects.

Belgian pastor and daughter killed 5 relatives — police

BRUSSELS (AFP) — A murder investigation of a 71-year-old pastor in Belgium took a gruesome new twist Saturday when police announced his daughter had confessed to helping him kill several of their family members.

Agnes Pandy, 39, who was herself arrested Friday one month after having her father, Andras Pandy, arrested last month, admitted to the murder of five relatives, Brussels public prosecutor Francois Monsieure said.

Two of the victims were killed with a sledgehammer, while three — including Agnes Pandy's mother Ilona Sores — were shot, Mr. Monsieure said.

He added that Agnes Pandy said she had herself killed her mother and that the victims' bodies had been cut up and disposed of to prevent discovery.

"Some bits had been dissolved in acid. Others were put in plastic bags and placed near abattoirs" in Brussels, Mr. Monsieure said.

It was the daughter's testimony to police about her father that led to the arrest of the Hungarian-born pastor last month.

Andras Pandy has been charged with murdering two ex-wives and four of his eight children between 1986 and 1990. He has denied the charges and has refused to speak to prosecutors for the past month.

Andras Pandy's ex-wives, two sons and two daughters disappeared without trace between 1986 and 1990. He was said to have hired Hungarian "actors" to play the role of missing family members on several occasions to divert suspicion.

During the investigation, police found traces of blood on a stairwell and flesh of undetermined origin in refrigerators at two of Mr. Pandy's three homes in Brussels.

to be still under way.

A search of the third home turned up an urn containing what he said were the ashes of a sister who died in Hungary in 1994.

Even before Agnes Pandy's statements, Belgian's press had described the father and daughter as a murdering duo, or "Dracula and Rasputin combined," as the daily Le Soir wrote.

Another paper, La Dernière Heure, said the pair may have killed more than 10 people.

It said that the tests on the bones found in Mr. Pandy's basement indicated they were not relatives and speculated that they may be the remains of four Hungarian women lured from Eastern Europe.

De Standaard newspaper, which had written that Agnes Pandy had admitted killing "her mother and one of her brothers," said she and Andras Pandy had conducted an incestuous relationship.

On Oct. 30, the Brussels weekly Blick ran an interview with Agnes Pandy in which she was reported as saying: "I am ashamed to be the daughter of a man who could turn out to be one of the worst serial killers of the century."

The case had been complicated by reports that the Andras Pandy detained might in fact be Pandy's younger brother and that Pandy had died in 1956. Belgian investigators have since largely discounted that theory.

The horrific nature of the case and the increasingly bizarre details uncovered and reported have added to a string of other recent nightmarish killings in Belgium.

In little over a year, the country has been left reeling by the case of paedophile Marc Dutroux, charged over the abduction and deaths of six Belgian girls, the case of Patrick Derochette, charged with the abduction and rape of a nine-year-old girl, and the discovery that a still-at-large serial killer has been leaving plastic bags containing the cut-up remains of four women in the southern city of Mons.

China to fulfil key rights covenants in Hong Kong

BEIJING (AFP) — China said Saturday it would co-operate with the United Nations in implementing two key human rights covenants in Hong Kong, even though Beijing is not yet a signatory to either treaty.

"China will provide relevant U.N. departments with information on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Hong Kong," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang.

"This is in order to enable the U.N. and the international community to have a better understanding," he said in a dispatch carried by Xinhua.

Alan Paul, British team leader of the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group, said Thursday that China was under an obligation to submit a human rights report to the U.N. under the 1984 Joint Declaration between London and Beijing, which paved the way for Hong Kong's return to the mainland on July 1. "Beijing was obliged by the joint declaration to submit the report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," Mr. Paul said.

China has previously disputed the obligation, saying only that the articles from the two covenants that are "suitable" to Hong Kong will be implemented there.

"China will cooperate with the U.N. to give an expression to the principle of 'one country, two systems' even though the country is not a signatory state to the two covenants yet," Mr. Shen said.

China is close to becoming a signatory to the covenant on economic, social and cultural rights, but has yet to agree to sign the sister agreement on civil and political rights.

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World News

Indian coalition to fall next week — MPs

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's ruling coalition will fall next week over a probe into the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, party leaders warned Saturday, as Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral hinted elections could follow.

Mani Shankar Aiyar, a prominent Congress I member, said the minority United Front would not be able to ward off the crisis following a Congress threat to withdraw its crucial support.

"I really can't see how this particular coalition combination can survive. I just can't see that happening," he said, adding that he gave it "until next week" before it collapsed.

Congress announced it would withdraw its parliamentary backing from the coalition unless the government ousted one of its founding members, the DMK party, after an official probe implicated it in Gandhi's 1991 murder.

The report said the regional party from southern India had given "tacit" support to Sri Lankan separatist rebels blamed for the assassination.

Inder Kumar Gujral, who became prime minister in April after the Congress forced the United Front to shed H.D. Deve Gowda as coalition leader and premier, said he too felt the elections were a possibility.

"It may be the next elections will take place as the country celebrates its 50th year of independence," Mr. Gujral said, hinting that his coalition government may not survive its full five-year term.

India went to the polls in April and May last year. New polls would lead to the country's fifth government within two years.

Leftist partners in the multi-party coalition also rejected the Congress demand for the DMK's ouster, killing possibilities of a new realignment within the United Front.

But Congress officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there were moves to try to form an alternative coalition to end the deadlock.

Mani Shankar Aiyar, however, said Congress President Sitaram Kesri would not back down from his demand that the DMK be ousted from the United Front.

"I don't see any chance of a change in the Congress stance — Mr. Kesri would have to do a complete U-turn for that," he said. "It would be a tremendous loss of face for Mr. Kesri and would cause howls of protest from the rank and file."

The opposition Hindu nationalists — Congress rivals who overtook it as India's largest parliamentary party after last year's general elections — meanwhile, accused the Congress of trying to forge a new coalition.

"The Congress and the Front are trying to cobble together yet another unnatural and undemocratic ruling coalition," Venkaiah Naidu, general secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian people's party) said.

Mr. Naidu said the Congress was trying to regain power "through the back door."

The BJP, with 162 members in India's 545-seat lower house, compared to the United Front's 180 and Congress' 140, got their first taste of power after last year's hung elections.

But their government was ousted in 13 days after it failed to prove a majority.

'Khmer Rouge genocide a Vietnamese hoax'

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — The commander of Cambodia's military resistance under ousted First Premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh has claimed the genocidal regime of the Khmer Rouge is a product of Vietnamese propaganda.

Thousands of sets of human remains in Phnom Penh were from people killed by Vietnamese forces rather than the notorious rebel movement which ruled here from 1975 to 1979, General Nhiek Bun Chhay said, despite a wealth of evidence the Khmer Rouge was responsible.

The Khmer Rouge is almost universally blamed for the deaths of up to two million Cambodians, or 20 per cent of the population, during its rule, including thousands of people killed after being detained at the Tuol Sleng, or S-21, interrogation centre here.

Nhiek Bun Chhay, now based on the Thai border as he leads opposition forces against Phnom Penh strongman Hun Sen, alleged Vietnamese forces which ousted the Khmer Rouge had presented the remains of their victims as being people killed by Pol Pot's bloody regime.

"You should know that the Tuol Sleng genocide museum was organised by Hun Sen and the Vietnamese," the commander told London's Sunday Times, in an interview also published by the Phnom Penh Post Saturday.

"If the Khmer Rouge killed the people, they would not put the evidence for people to see," added the former deputy commander in chief of Cambodia's armed forces, who has struck an alliance with the Khmer Rouge against Second Prime Minister Hun Sen.

Prince Ranariddh was ousted in two days of bloody clashes in Phnom Penh last July and Nhiek Bun Chhay maintains an opposition stronghold in the northwest of the country.

His comments echo claims of Khmer Rouge leaders — including Pol Pot, who has reportedly been jailed by the movement — that they knew nothing of the torture and killings at Tuol Sleng in southern Phnom Penh.

"The bones displayed at Tuol Sleng were collected from Pursat province and the 'Oral Mountain,' Nhiek Bun Chhay said.

"The Vietnamese killed approximately 15,000 people in Pursat and 20,000 in Orail" in 1979.

Hun Sen was a leading member of the government installed here after Vietnam's ouster of the Khmer Rouge and the rebels claim he is a puppet of Hanoi.

Tuol Sleng, a former high school, is maintained as a grim memorial to its victims, with human remains displayed alongside pictures of tortured corpses.

North Korea finally agrees to formal peace talks

NEW YORK (AFP) — North Korea's Stalinist regime finally agreed Friday to sit down at formal peace talks to replace a 1953 armistice with South Korea and discuss an end to decades of hostility on the peninsula.

The historic four-way talks will open in Geneva on Dec. 9, it was officially announced here Friday.

The agenda for the talks between the United States, China and the two Koreas will be "the establishment of the peace regime on the Korean Peninsula and issues concerning tension reduction there," according to the text of a joint communiqué.

It was issued at the end of a day of preparatory talks between representatives of the four countries at New York's Columbia University.

The agenda for the Geneva talks was deliberately broad and would allow "any party to raise any issue," said a senior U.S. official familiar with the talks.

North Korea had earlier insisted that a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Asia should be part of the agenda.

At this meeting, however, "North Koreans came with the seriousness that had been absent from the last meeting" and that demand was dropped, the U.S. official said.

Friday's agreement was "an extremely important moment," the official said. But he cautioned that "there will be many sessions over a period of at least a few years" in Geneva.

"Believing we could get it done in a few months would be foolish," he said.

The Korean Peninsula has been divided by an uneasy truce since the 1950-1953 Korean war, with the Communist North and capitalist South maintaining close ties to their backers in the conflict, China and the United States, respectively.

Tensions on the peninsula have recently risen as the isolated, reclusive North Korean regime appeared to be facing economic collapse and famine.

In Seoul, South Korea welcomed the decision and pledged "utmost efforts" for their success.

"It took a long time and there were many twists and turns before this agreement was reached," a spokesman for President Kim Young-Sam said.

"We appreciate the fact that it is the result of a shared perception by the concerned parties that settling peace on the peninsula is more urgent than anything else."

In Washington, President Bill Clinton welcomed the announcement, saying, "I am pleased with the agreement reached today in New York to begin plenary talks to achieve a lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula."

"There is a lot of hard work ahead but this is an important first step and the United States is prepared to be a full partner in helping the Korean people build a future of peace."

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said in Vancouver that North Korea's agreement to take part in permanent peace talks marked the start of "a long road."

But she also voiced hope for the negotiations, saying: "Success is in the interest of all the parties as it is in the region and the world as a whole."

The United States and South Korea first proposed peace talks among the four Korean war combatants in April 1996.

Two rounds of preliminary talks in August and September broke down amid North Korean demands for massive food aid and the drawing-down of U.S. forces in Asia. Washington has 37,000 troops stationed on the southern side of the world's most heavily armed border.

Pyeongyang has been under pressure to open up its isolated country following the collapse of the Soviet empire and several failed harvests that have brought many of its 22 million people to the brink of starvation.

North Korea has sought to link food aid to any talks. This has been rejected by Washington, but the United States has participated in international aid to the North Koreans.

The North and South Korean delegations were headed by the countries' deputy foreign ministers, Kim Kye-Gwan and Song Young-Shik, respectively. The U.S. team was led by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Charles Karman and the Chinese by Deputy Foreign Minister Chen Jian.

Rock star Michael Hutchence found hanged in Sydney hotel

SYDNEY (AFP) — Rock superstar Michael Hutchence, lead singer of the band INXS, was found dead in a luxury hotel suite here Saturday after apparently committing suicide.

The flamboyant 37-year-old Australian, whose band saw world record sales of more than 20 million, was found hanging by a leather belt in a fifth-floor suite of the Ritz Carlton Hotel in the exclusive Double Bay harbour-side suburb.

Crowds quickly gathered outside the hotel after hearing the news although police refused to confirm Hutchence's identity.

The belt was taken away for scientific examination, police said, but there were no suspicious circumstances surrounding the death.

There were a number of prescription drugs in the room but no illegal drugs were found. His body was found by a hotel employee.

With his death Hutchence joins a long line of rock stars who have enjoyed international fame and huge record sales before taking their own lives.

His apparent suicide follows most recently the death of Kurt Cobain, lead singer with the group Nirvana who shot himself in Seattle in April 1994 at the age of 27. He took his life after a long struggle with drugs and depression.

Hutchence's girlfriend the British television personality Paula Yates said through her lawyer in London she had "no explanation" for her boyfriend's death.

Hutchence and Yates, also 37, had a child, Heavenly Hiraani Tiger Lily, and she had three children by a previous marriage to Irish singer Bob Geldof. The couple were due to marry in January on the Tahitian island of Bora Bora.

"We can give no explanation for Michael's death," lawyer Anthony Burton told reporters outside the couple's home in the upmarket Chelsea district of London.

"Paula heard this devastating news through a friend and myself a short while ago... I would ask that she be left alone with her children and friends to enable her to absorb and cope with what has happened," he added.

Yates will fly out shortly to Sydney, he said.

"She is deeply upset and devastated. It is her intention to go to Australia as soon as possible with their daughter Tiger Lily."

The lawyer said he had himself spoken to Hutchence recently and found him happy. "I last spoke to him a few weeks ago, he was very happy," he said.

Hutchence flew into Sydney Tuesday from London ahead of the 20th anniversary tour for INXS, who have recorded 10 albums. Ms. Yates and their baby were due to fly out here next week to join him.

INXS, which was formed in Perth after Hutchence teamed up with Andrew and Tim Farriss in 1977, have spent the last few days rehearsing at the Sydney television studios of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).

He was due to meet fellow INXS members Saturday at the ABC studios to record a television appearance.

Hutchence, always seen as the focus of the band, had a similar strutting, pointing style to that of Rolling Stones lead singer Mick Jagger.

His associates have said he appeared happy with life in the days before his death.

Hutchence reportedly dined with his father and mother at a restaurant here the night before he died and again appeared relaxed and happy.

Restaurant Lola Crossingham told the Channel Ten television network he was smiling and friendly with the staff, although his father remarked at one stage he was worried about his son.

Hutchence's private life fell repeatedly under the media spotlight in recent years for his romances with glamorous showbusiness women, including fellow Australian soap star and pop singer Kylie Minogue and model Helena Christensen.

INXS had major hits in Australia early in their career with songs including Burn For You, I Send A Message and Don't Change. The band scored a major success in the United States with the album Kick and the singles New Sensation, and Need You Tonight.

They also performed a sell-out show at London's Wembley Stadium.

The band toured constantly throughout the world and performed at major charity gigs including the Australian end of the Live Aid concert series in the 1980s.

Record sales for the group, however, fell in recent years as their popularity waned.



Australian pop star Michael Hutchence (left) sits with girlfriend Paula Yates and their baby named Heavenly Hiraani Tiger Lily in a file photo taken in Sydney October 25, 1996 (Reuters photo)

Repairs give Mir crew a breath of fresh air

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian cosmonauts aboard the Mir space station have installed a new air conditioning system to run initially in tandem with the spacecraft's existing unit, Interfax reported Saturday citing space officials.

Mir commander Anatoly Solovoyov and engineer Pavel Vinogradov have been working since Monday on the system, which will go on-line after final adjustments and testing, officials at Russian flight control said.

The pair worked on the defective air conditioning system aboard the 11-year-old craft — which has suffered a string of breakdowns in recent months — during space walks on Nov. 3 and 6.

The other astronaut currently on board Mir, NASA's David Wolf, was to conduct scientific experiments Saturday.

His Russian counterparts were to spend the day cleaning the craft's living quarters ahead of a television hook-up with their relatives.

Mr. Wolf, whose debut space walk Dec. 5 could be put back a month, is due to quit Mir on Jan. 17, when he will be replaced by another NASA astronaut Andy Thomas who is due to arrive aboard the U.S. space shuttle Endeavour, Interfax said.

Pakistani army plays conciliator between civilian rulers

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistan is looking to the army to broker a lasting solution to a constitutional crisis after its initial intervention eased bitter tensions, observers said Saturday.

The country heaved a sigh of relief when last-minute intervention by army chief General Jehangir Karamat Thursday averted a move by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's party to impeach President Farooq Ahmed Leghari.

Behind-the-scenes efforts with the help of the army are now under way to restore working relations between the two top leaders, sources and reports said.

"The army has to broker a permanent peace after the temporary ceasefire," said commentator Aslam Shikhi, emphasising the need to repair the damage to relations between the two pillars of the state.

The general has played a "positive role," said another commentator, Waseem Ahmad Shah, adding the national interest demands the power centres do not overstep their areas of jurisdiction.

National dailies praised the conciliatory role of the army, while regretting the situation had been allowed to worsen to the extent that the army chief had to step in.

"It is a supreme irony that the army's mediation helped to save democracy," The News commented editorially.

But this "has earned the military leadership much credit," it said, calling for "checks and balances" in the interests of democracy.

The mass-circulation daily Jang said a meeting between Mr. Sharif and Mr. Leghari could be arranged soon as part of the reconciliation drive. It said there was a proposal to form a consultative body like the national security council which was created by Mr. Leghari before the elections in February but rejected by Mr. Sharif after assuming office.

The council, grouping the president, prime minister, services chiefs and some key ministers, had been formed to advise the government on vital national issues.

"As a result of general frustration caused by the upheaval people are looking to the army to guide things onto the right path," a politician and former provincial governor, Ghulam Mustafa Khar, said.

The showdown three days ago loomed as Mr. Leghari resisted pressure to sign a law hurriedly passed by parliament in an apparent bid to give Mr. Sharif right of appeal if he is convicted by the Supreme Court in a contempt case.

Such an appeal would put any conviction in abeyance, saving him from possible disqualification from parliament and the collapse of his nine-month old government.

Mr. Sharif and several of his colleagues were formally charged with contempt Wednesday for allegedly ridiculing the judiciary in a sequel to an earlier row with the chief justice over appointments of judges.

The dispute over the appointments was resolved on Oct. 31 when Mr. Sharif backed off and implemented Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah's demand to elevate five high court judges to the Supreme Court.

As the crisis cooled down, a five-judge Supreme Court bench headed by Mr. Shah adjourned the crucial contempt proceedings for a week.

Much now depends on the outcome of the case, observers said. Mr. Sharif has personally appeared to assure the court of his high regard for the judiciary and expressing sorrow over any remarks deemed to be a contempt.

Sporadic battles continue as Tigers mark 'heroes week'

COLOMBO (AFP) — At least three Tamil Tiger rebels and three security personnel died in sporadic fighting as the guerrillas commemorated comrades killed in the 15-year separatist war, the Defence Ministry said Saturday.

A police sub-inspector and a constable were killed in a confrontation with the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas in the eastern district of Ampara, the ministry said.

It said two rebels were also killed by the police. Another soldier and a Tiger guerrilla were killed in two separate clashes in the north of the country.

The sporadic clashes came as the LTTE began its "heroes week" celebrations Friday and Sri Lanka went on maximum alert for guerrilla bombings.

Thousands of troops are also attempting to open a 76-kilometre highway through territory held by the LTTE in the north of the country. They have only 20 kilometres more to go, a Defence Ministry spokesman said.

Spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said about 20,000 soldiers were advancing cross-country to open the LTTE-held land route to the northern peninsula of Jaffna, which must currently be supplied by air and sea.

He did not say when they hoped to establish the land route to Jaffna but said there had been minimal resistance in the past few days.

During "heroes week" last year, an LTTE suicide bomber blew himself up in front of a police vehicle in the northeastern port town of Trincomalee but failed to kill his intended target, the area's top police officer.

The LTTE's memorial week involves religious services as well as a speech by Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran, who turns 43 next Wednesday.

The LTTE lost its first fighter to security forces on Nov. 27, 1982.

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More challenges ahead

NOW THAT 40 senators have been named for the Upper House following the election of 80 deputies for the Lower House, what remains is to name a government that will take us well into 1998 and even beyond.

Judging from the composition of both Houses of Parliament which excludes the mainstream opposition led by the Muslim Brotherhood and other political figures who boycotted the elections, the stage is set for a government which is willing and ready to undertake the difficult choice of facing two oppositions, one from within the Lower House and the other outside it.

In addition, of course, the government whether headed by Dr. Abdul Salam Majali or another prime minister, will be confronted with the old new challenges of the stalemate on the peace-with-Israel front and the economic reforms package which is yet to be wrapped up in its entirety.

On the peace front, Jordan, while persisting in its role as a facilitator on the one hand and a role model for peace between Arabs and Israelis on the other, will have to gear itself for all kinds of possibilities, depending on what happens not only on the Palestinian track but also on the Syrian and Lebanese fronts. Of importance to Jordan are the issues of the final distribution of water shares among the parties, a settlement to the Palestinian refugees' problem, Jerusalem and the final status of the emerging Palestinian entity. Also on the peace agenda is comprehensive and functional peace between the Arab World and Israel.

On the economic reform programme, any new government will have to continue the readjustment programme that Jordan had agreed with the International Monetary Fund following the near collapse of the economy in 1988 and 1989. While no old or new government will easily find quick fixes to the problems of unemployment and poverty, other pressing issues can still be dealt with. These include privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation of the economy in preparation for integration with regional and globalised market.

The next government will also have other tasks to contend with. Relations with Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinians need to be nurtured and further strengthened. While it is both necessary and logical to maintain peace and relations with Israel, it is of the utmost importance for Jordan to enhance its Arab relations at the same time.

With a Parliament that will most probably be pre-occupied mainly with service-oriented issues, and an opposition that operates and functions outside the dome, the next government will have to work doubly hard on almost every front — be it social, economic, political or otherwise.

It will be an enormous and intricate task. Whoever the next prime minister is, he and his team will have to be prepared for the tough challenge that lies ahead.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek said Iraq has made real gains from the latest crisis with the United Nations and that the U.S. has met with failure. The crisis showed the world that the United States stood alone without allies except for Britain in its preparations to strike against Iraq, and so the coalition has collapsed, according to the writer. Dr. Fanek said the crisis brought the question of sanctions once again to the fore, with Russia assuming the role of gradually lifting the sanctions on the Arab country. On the Arab side most Arab states stood firm in the face of any aggression on Iraq, and the crisis helped the Arab states to unite their positions and show the U.S. to be a nation bent on aggression and lacking real support for its actions from the rest of the world community, the writer continued. Furthermore, the head of the U.N. inspection team has admitted that the inspectors' mission has taken a long time and that the inspectors will focus their attention as the Iraqi nuclear weapons programmes has been completely destroyed, he said. The latest crisis proved that Baghdad still holds the initiative in every move and has achieved these gains, saving itself from any possible military strike to its installations, Dr. Fanek said.

Al Ra'i's Fakhri Kaware, criticised the procedures concerning the medical checks of visitors to the Kingdom in light of a recent report about four non-Jordanian citizens, two men and two women who were allowed to enter the country while suspected of being infected with AIDS. The writer quoted a report in the local press that the four persons have fled from their hotel as soon as the health authorities suspected their health condition. He said that like all other visitors these persons were allowed to stay two weeks upon entering Jordan, but should undergo an AIDS test if they plan to stay for six months, according to Ministry of Health regulations. But, Kaware said, during their first few days of their stay in the country these persons could have infected other people with the disease, which according to the latest Ministry of Health statistics has so far infected 121 persons in Jordan. The writer claimed that it sometimes happens that the special AIDS test centre which is located in Jabal Hussein is forced to issue visitors an AIDS-free certificate without subjecting them to the required test due to the great numbers of visitors. He said the health authorities are to blame for any shortcomings which pose grave danger to the Jordanian people.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

Jordan emerges a winner from Doha

NOW THAT the 4th Economic Conference of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has concluded its activities, one may ask: What did Jordan gain out of participation, at a very high level, in contradiction of the general trend led by Egypt and Saudi Arabia to boycott the event on the pretext that the peace process has made no meaningful progress.

In my opinion, the most important benefit that Jordan derived from its active participation in the conference is cementing its already excellent relations with the state of Qatar, which will yield political, economic, and financial returns as I shall show immediately.

In the field of manpower, the government of Qatar decided to give Jordanians' priority over all other nationalities in filling the vacancies which will occur from now on, except when Jordanians are not able or willing to take certain jobs.

Eight thousand Jordanians are currently working in Qatar. The Qatari government decided to double the number in the coming few months. The government also requested that Jordan's ambassador in Doha help in this endeavour.

As far as trade is concerned, the Qatari market will be wide open to Jordanian agricultural and industrial prod-

ucts without any restrictions. Exports will of course help Jordan in creating more jobs within the country. This is very important, taking into account that unemployment in Jordan may have reached 27 per cent of manpower, according to some surveys conducted by respected institutions. The opening up of jobs will reduce poverty which afflicts almost one quarter of Jordanian families.

At the financial level, Qatari officials expressed willingness to resume assistance to Jordan. The amount of the annual support will be announced during the visit to Doha by HRH Crown Prince Hassan expected to take place soon.

At a different level, Jordanian officials were given the opportunity to address the world directly or through the media, and present the Kingdom's investment-friendly climate and opportunities during the full three working days of the conference.

Jordanian businesspersons from the private sector were also able to present their projects especially in industry and tourism in order to attract Arab and foreign partners. It is difficult to quantify the results in this area.

Of course we do not expect Arab and foreign investors to rush into signing contracts on the spot. That takes time. Suffice it to say that the interest of many potential

investors was aroused. At least they now know that Jordan is ready and open to international business.

From the national standpoint, Jordan was active and successful in putting forward Arab views towards the peace process and in warning against the destructive policies of the present Israeli government. Jordan was instrumental in formulating the conference communiqué. In general we were able to put thousands of politicians and businesspersons in the picture regarding the situation in the Middle East from a Jordanian and Arab point of view.

The regrettable absence of the Egyptian and Palestinian delegations was, to the Israelis, a blessing. Israel was the only beneficiary of the ill-advised boycott. Being absent may hurt your own cause and certainly helps achieve nothing. A boycott is a bankrupt instrument in today's positive approach to issues.

Finally, it may be worth mentioning that Jordan's participation in the Doha conference did not undermine any issue, it was not costly by any measure. Our absence, however, would have been a disaster.

This, I believe, is the judgement of reason and wise cost/benefit calculation. Those who specialise in slogans have a different viewpoint.

Clinton's sway abroad is undermined at home

By David S. Broder

WASHINGTON — The showdown with Saddam Hussein comes at an awkward time for the United States. Not only is the international coalition that George Bush assembled when Saddam last played the bully showing signs of unravelling, but Bill Clinton's foreign policy support at home has rarely looked shakier.

True, the House of Representatives gave President Clinton its blessing to use U.S. military forces if diplomacy fails to persuade the Iraqi dictator to allow resumption of United Nations inspections of suspected chemical and biological weapons caches. But that hardly made up for the damage inflicted on Mr. Clinton in the final weeks of the session — and earlier.

The House of Representatives blocked a vote on giving Mr. Clinton the same trade negotiation authority that previous presidents had been granted, balked at carrying out a U.S. commitment to repay its back debt to the United Nations, and denied new U.S. funds for the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) currency stabilisation work.

The first rebuff was administered by Mr. Clinton's fellow Democrats, who were dissatisfied with his assurances that he would not trade away U.S. jobs to foreign competitors. The last two setbacks came from House Republicans, retaliating for Mr. Clinton's refusal to bow to their demand to curtail international family planning programmes over the abortion issue.

Whatever the source, the impact abroad was the same: To raise doubts about Mr. Clinton's ability to act for America on the world stage. The wobble in U.S. leadership is the

worst it has been in decades.

The day after the fast-track legislation was pulled to avoid defeat in the House, The Washington Post quoted Johannes Heiman, an official of the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: "I think it puts America at a major disadvantage in negotiating free trade agreements in the future. There is a lack of confidence now, an enormous disillusion."

When the House refused to appropriate the \$926 million that the United States owed in back dues to the United Nations and also stripped out authority for \$3.5 billion in loan guarantees to the IMF, The New York Times reported that Mr. Clinton "lost two of his top foreign policy initiatives (and) could be hamstrung when it comes to dealing with two looming crises," Saddam Hussein's threats and the turmoil in Asian currency markets.

These latest rebuffs to Mr. Clinton's foreign policy underline a little noted pattern of congressional intransigence during his presidency. It began in 1994, when Congress refused to endorse his use of U.S. troops in Haiti. Leaders of the Senate, then under Democratic control, had to scramble to prevent a vote formally opposing military intervention. After the troops went in, both chambers called for "prompt and orderly" withdrawal.

At the beginning of 1995, Mr. Clinton asked Congress to underwrite a \$40 billion loan guarantee to Mexico to contain a peso crisis which he said threatened the economies of the whole Western Hemisphere. A week later, facing what The Associated Press called "unyielding opposition in Congress," he abandoned the effort and instead used his executive authority to provide a smaller loan — all of

which, incidentally, was repaid with interest ahead of schedule.

Late in 1995, Congress balked at backing Mr. Clinton's policy in Bosnia. The House voted to oppose his deployment of troops; even with the vanguard of U.S. forces in that country, it came within eight votes of cutting off funds for the operation. The Senate, which earlier forced him to veto a bill ending the embargo on aid to Bosnian Muslims, defeated a resolution denouncing the use of U.S. forces by only five votes.

When I recited this record of non-support for Mr. Clinton's international policies to a senior White House official last week, his only comment was: "The cold war is over, you know."

It is certainly the case that the disappearance of a nuclear-armed Soviet threat has diminished deference to the president's judgement on matters that he says involve the national interest. But his failure to mobilise public opinion behind any of these initiatives is also part of the story. And it raises the question of what will happen next spring, when he seeks Senate approval of bringing three new countries into NATO at the same time that he apparently will have to try to extend the deadline for the promised withdrawal of U.S. troops from Bosnia.

To avoid a truly crippling repudiation of his leadership, President Clinton will have to discuss foreign policy with the American people in a way that he has avoided for five years.

The Washington Post

Israeli press comes down hard on Netanyahu

By Gideon Samet

TEL AVIV — I can't speak for the Israeli press, but this much I know: There is nothing comical about the harsh criticism of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the Israeli media. Nor is there anything funny about growing doubts among Israelis, as well as among world leaders, concerning Mr. Netanyahu's political mode of operation.

These references to the ludicrous follow a sweeping accusation of the Israeli press by A.M. Rosenthal (International Herald Tribune, Opinion, Nov. 15-16). While highly praising Mr. Netanyahu, the column said he is vilified by "a press almost comically biased against him," and by foreign governments "that do not forgive him for defeating Shimon Peres."

Concerned observers of the Israeli scene may indeed wonder how Mr. Netanyahu's domestic and international reputation has

dropped so far.

An articulate, well-wishing man with scant political experience had in no time swept Likud and won the 1996 elections against the country's most agile statesman.

And then, gradually yet swiftly, so many turned against him, severely questioning his credibility. The list includes Bill Clinton (who intentionally avoiding a meeting with Mr. Netanyahu, while demonstratively entertaining Lea Rabin and Mr. Peres for lunch), European leaders, almost all of his own party's top echelon, and most Israelis who anointed him as their fastest ascending (and youngest) leader ever.

What in the performance and personal makeup of this very talented person has made the wheel turn? Well, quite simply, too many mistakes too soon in too many areas.

Arguably, the press has its cruel ways

with leaders everywhere. But it has not invented the decline of most economic indicators.

Nor, by any measure, is it an impish journalistic concoction that the Netanyahu government has conducted tenaciously erroneous processes of decision making — whether in nominating for 24 hours an unqualified attorney general, or in dealing with the Palestinians. And profusely critical media are the result, not the perpetrators, of a new malaise among Israelis.

Much of it resulted from what Mr. Rosenthal calls Mr. Netanyahu's "problem" — the personality traits that stand between him and an acceptable set of political rules of behaviour. It is a problem, according to that simplistic assessment, easily rectifiable if Mr. Netanyahu would just "teach himself about himself."

But the problem goes beyond a psychological tutorial. The press and other political observers have so far failed to see the

prime minister's direction. Is he really aiming at a final settlement with the Palestinians? Does he, like his recent predecessors, have a reasonably clear concept of how to go about peace?

What mystifies, and often worries, many Israelis is that Mr. Netanyahu has been a devout keeper of this and other crucial secrets. Eighteen months into his administration, lacking a defined national agenda, he still likes to don the aura of a riddle.

It is a totally unentertaining duty of the press to keep shedding stark, sometimes annoying, light on this blurred image. If the media should be blamed for anything concerning Mr. Netanyahu, it is failure to render the picture clearer.

The writer is a columnist and a member of the editorial board of the Israeli daily Ha'aretz. This article is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

M. KAHIL



LETTERS

Discoveries prove differently

To the Editor:

IN LETTERS to the editor (Jordan Times, Nov. 20-21, 1997), under the heading "Raising uncertainties," Allison McQuitty and Madeline Sarley, while applauding the increased attention being given to the presentation of archaeological sites, sound a note of caution about the reconstruction of a wooden dome over the central area of the monumental gateway (termed reception hall) which led to the Umayyad complex on the Citadel. They maintain that there is no architectural evidence for the existence of a stone dome, and that some scholars have conjectured that there was a light wooden superstructure as now seen.

While we appreciate this note of caution, it should be pointed out that the uncertainties surrounding such a fundamental issue as the existence of a dome are not as uncertain as they indicate in Ms. McQuitty and Ms. Sarley's letter. Investigation and restoration work carried out in the last year under the direction of Dr. Antonio Almagro had uncovered window-sills on the stone course overlying the frieze which surrounds the interior space. Such sills would not have been necessary had the central space been left open. Furthermore, two voussoirs, which apparently belonged to one of the corner squinches have been recovered.

The reconstruction of the wooden dome will also serve a practical purpose, that of protecting the amazingly rich carved stones from the natural elements. Hopefully once the project is completed, the interior space of the monumental gateway will serve as an orientation centre as well as a venue for various cultural activities.

Ghazi Bisheh
Director General
Department of Antiquities

The opportunity to think, is one of the most important aspects of life — Nelson Mandela on his 27 years in prison

Interview

The following are excerpts from an interview with South African President Nelson Mandela conducted by the Middle East Broadcasting Centre and aired Friday on MBC's programme Agenda.

Q: Recently you visited several Arab countries in the Middle East, but you chose to visit Libya twice — why?

Mandela: As you know one of the most important issues which we have addressed is a matter which has created tensions far beyond the borders of Libya. I took up this matter when I went to Edinburgh and it was necessary therefore for me to come back not so much to report but at the same time to discuss the matter with certain individuals.

Q: You are referring to Tony Blair?

Mandela: Of course it was unavoidable for me to discuss the matter with Prime Minister Tony Blair but I never asked him to do anything about it. I had gone there to attend the Commonwealth Conference. As chairperson of that conference he (Blair) was very busy with all the heads of state in attendance. Of course it would have been unnatural for me not to mention the matter but not from the view of him doing anything about it.

Q: But there is a marked change in the tone of the British government after this meeting. Did you play a role? And can we expect more?

Mandela: Well I don't think it would be fair to say that there is any change in the attitude of the British government it was due to me. The Labour Party has a very capable prime minister, young, enthusiastic and quite keen to contribute to the lessening of tensions in the world — and I believe that it is something which he does because he realises how important it is to make this contribution and of course Britain is a very important country.

Q: Of course the Americans were not too happy with your visit to Libya or with the intimacy with which you were received by Col. Qadhafi. There were some hostile remarks exchanged. Do emotions play a role here?

Mandela: I have the greatest respect for President Clinton — he is undoubtedly one of the most enlightened leaders of the world. And I think, generally speaking, he is playing his card very well, and it is difficult for me to talk about President Clinton because emotions do play a part. This was the man who supported our struggle against apartheid, and he got in touch with me long before I was head of state and invited me to the Democratic Party Convention, although as a result of opposition from other quarters I was unable to go (other quarters in the United States). When he became president, he went all out to assist me. The differences on any issue do not affect our relations at all.

Q: There are those who say that the Americans exerted certain pressures over the arms deal with Syria — to what extent is that true?

Mandela: Let me say quite clearly we will not allow any country, no matter how powerful, to threaten our sovereignty and independence, and to try and lay down an agenda for us. That we will never accept. On differences on specific issues they will not define our relations — we find the harmonious relations between the United States and South Africa to be in the interest of the countries.

Q: Regarding the Syrian arms deal, following two years of negotiations, is South Africa backtracking after (U.S. Vice President) Al Gore's visit?

Mandela: Never. There was never any backtracking. What happened was that we advertised our technologies and left it to Syria to accept it. That is all we did — we have never changed from that. There was never any backtracking. If I came out openly and said that the United States has no right what so ever to dictate to us, that was the position, that was the law, and we will never change from that.

Q: During your struggle for freedom, you had relations with many of the Arab countries, especially, perhaps, Algeria. Ever since you came to power your relations with Israel have changed dramatically. Can we say your relations with the Arab World played a role in this — or is it strictly the interests of South Africa that have changed, perhaps, in regards to Israel?

Mandela: No, I don't think that is a very accurate analysis. To begin with when we came out of prison, we were invited by practically the entire world. The only country that did not invite us was Israel. But when they invited us, I think it was some time in 1993, we accepted the invitation — I was supposed to visit Israel for the first time in February 1994, something happened so I was advised by leaders inside and outside Israel not to come, and secondly, when I was invited again, I something happened and it became difficult for me to go. I must point out I have been in consultation on this question with (Palestinian President) Yasser Arafat and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. Even after the change of government, when Benyamin Netanyahu came to power, they were themselves in favour of me going to Israel — but there were other issues which made that visit difficult. I hope you won't pressure me because some of these matters are very sensitive. And if one is going to make progress in addressing this issue, an element of confidentiality is of crucial importance.

Q: The Arab World, obviously leaders and people look up to you — and look to you to play a role in certain issues that concern them, for example, the peace process which has taken so long and is now going through a very sensitive period as you mentioned. Another thing is the situation in Iraq. Would you ever consider, or have you been approached, to play a role in mediating in these issues?

Mandela: My attitude has always been that I am a party of the United Nations and I supported very fully the decision of the United Nations. I am against individuals acting outside the organisations which are there to address these issues. Not only am I a South African but a member of the United Nations. I have the greatest respect for Secretary General Kofi Annan, who is handling these matters very well. Any Kofi needs me to help I will do so without hesitation. But time to play the role of peace maker as an individual country — that I constantly refuse to do. It is only when I am asked by some organisational structure, of which I am a member, I will agree to undertake an assignment of peace.

Q: And would you welcome such an approach?

Mandela: Well you see, I've got quite a lot of assignments already in Africa and elsewhere and I would not like to take on more than that. But it would depend on the aspect I am required to attend to and then I will give my answer. Generally speaking, I am part of the United Nations and I will do anything they want me to do.

Q: Before I move on to more personal questions if you allow me, I would like to ask about the Muslim community in South Africa. Obviously they played a role and were critical in the struggle for freedom. Would you confirm that?

Mandela: Our relations with the Muslim community in South Africa are the best. They are part and parcel of the

South African community, and as you say, they have played an important if not a key part. In a cabinet of 27 South Africans, we have no less than three Muslims holding very important positions. That is an indication of the important role that they are playing. It is an indication by South African society that this community must not only be appreciated for its role it must represent us as a community from the cabinet.

Q: If you permit me now to talk about your personal struggle. Of course the world was watching you, when you were finally released after 27 years. You emerged without bitterness that would seem normal. You were committed to treating whites and blacks in Africa equally. Where do you draw the tolerance and that patience from? Is it your tribal background — is it from your mother or is it you, Nelson Mandela?

Mandela: No it would be unfair to single out individuals, because all of my comrades/colleagues not only from the ANC but from other sectors of the liberation movement who have been in jail, have very little bitterness if any in their hearts, because they appreciate that you pass through this world only once, and a man who has been in prison for a long term has missed the opportunity to serve society. They have come out now, they are no longer young, they are thinking of something positive, something constructive to give strength and hope to the masses of the people.

Q: Of all the leaders, when you decided to start negotiating with the South African government, you took the decision independently. You did not consult, you did not confirm with any of those people who highly regard. Suppose it hadn't worked, wasn't this a big risk on your part, weren't you afraid of jeopardising the commitment you made to these people and their faith in you?

Mandela: I had the advantage of having been a lawyer before I went to jail and of handling very sensitive matters for my clients, where the law would never help me. And I had to negotiate with the authorities who were in charge with regards to those problems. I knew they were ready to start negotiations, but at the same time I had a tremendous task. I could not convince my own colleagues; and if I started by consulting them and they said "don't do this," and they would have said so, I would have been expelled from the movement. So it was better to start and confront them with the fait accompli. Fortunately, my colleagues are people who are highly competent with the depth of thinking and a wide vision, and once I prepared a memo and smuggled it out of jail when I reached a critical position where I was confident I would never say no, I then told them and those who were in prison and various prisons in Robben Island. I invited them and briefed them on what was happening, but I had gone so far that it was difficult for them to say no.

Q: And there was no resentment whatsoever on any of their parts? You did not feel that some of them were a bit disappointed that you did not perhaps have the trust in a particular person, let us say somebody who was extremely close to you?

Mandela: Well fortunately in our organisation we have leaders who are broad-minded and would take everybody as a person of integrity, would deal with people on the basis of honesty. I was convinced that once I spelled out the details they were supported, and that's what happened. Of course in such matters you will have a few people with doubts and they express those doubts. But I reached a better stage when I had something positive to report to them.

Q: In your book you question yourself on several occasions. We have often heard that you ask yourself whether you have taken the right course in your life. Have you reached an answer to that question today?

Mandela: Well there is no doubt that the direction has always been correct, the direction that I and others with me and those who persisted with us, we took the right direction. In such matters you can never be correct to concentrate on just one individual, because I am myself the product of a collective effort of a team. They shaped my ideas, my outlook, and I fit in an organisation which was based on a collective effort, on team work and therefore the direction which the organisation has taken, and in which I fit, was always correct. But, of course, there are times when you think of yourself and when you think of your family, your mother, you think of your wife and your children and you see them suffering and you ask the question did I take the right decision. You have those doubts when you are confronted with problems of your family being persecuted, when you are humiliated and your children are being hounded by the security forces. You raise those questions, and they become something very painful to you, but nevertheless, at the end of it you feel there are people who have suffered more than I have. After all I am better off than them and therefore I have no reason to complain because they are not complaining.

Q: I want to ask you a question the subject of which I know this is a sore subject. I will respect your preference not to speak about it, but I would like to ask you about Winnie. I was one of those people, and I think many women would feel the same, who when we thought of you in prison we thought of her. We thought when you were released you would both get a chance to live together and be happy. And then the shock



came, and I am sure the shock for you is much bigger, but for us it was as well. I understand that this is a private matter if you do not wish to discuss it, but just in perhaps a brief manner tell us a bit about Winnie today in your life?

Mandela: This was a tragedy, because this is a woman I loved. She suffered a great deal, she became the running point of the movement, and at one of the most difficult periods of our struggle. And I did look forward to coming out and

saying to her your days of isolation and loneliness, of pain are over, I am here to help you, to give you love and security. But there are intimate problems which would not be fair to her for me to refer to and which perhaps have led to the breakdown of the marriage. And all I can assure you is that I strongly resisted taking this decision, but ultimately I had to take the decision. To some extent I referred to these things in court, but I don't like to repeat them here.

Q: Would you like to say something about Graca Marcel?

Mandela: There is no doubt she is an outstanding lady. She is self made — fiercely independent highly motivated. The world bodies on which she serves have here travelling almost every month: either going to Japan, or Vietnam, to Egypt or Geneva, to the US, Sweden, to Chile. Every month I must miss her because she undertakes one trip or other. She has received awards, honorary degrees, and has led a very rich life in her own right. In fact I got the impression I don't think she will continue tagging along with me, because on many of her trips she is regarded as the first and most important guest, as a head of state. I am merely there to support her. So I am asking this question, is it wise to take such a lady along?

Q: If you were to go to the streets of South Africa today, what would you expect the people to say of you as a president, blacks and whites alike?

Mandela: Well, I think it's often better to leave this to the people themselves. It is not proper that I should say anything which appears that I'm biting my own chest. At the same time it is not usual for a man to condemn himself, but all that I want to say is that the people of South Africa have given me a lot of the strength, a lot of hope from all sections of the population, and this has been the source of my happiness, my strength, and hope for the future.

Q: One final question. You've had a long history as a freedom fighter, you've had a brief history as a president. Which have you found most difficult and which role have enjoyed most?

Mandela: It's very difficult to say because you can't separate the life that you lived outside, which was full of challenges and excitement, and the life that you lived in jail. To come into contact with the leaders of various political affiliations, you learn for the first time that the rival organisations have produced very capable leaders, and there's something to be learned from their own policies even though they clash with yours. But in prison we took the opportunity to sit down together to change youth, and I think we made a great deal of movement towards removing the bitterness in our polemics and concentrating on things like we should go together, we should move the country forward, and therefore it's not easy to say I found life in prison more difficult than outside because you could sit down and think. The opportunity to think, is one of the most important aspects of life, and if you don't have it you can make serious mistakes. At least in jail you can stand away from yourself and look at yourself from a distance and say I could've done so and so better, and you try to correct those things when you come out.

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ed at home

Netanyahu

LETTERS

overies prove differently

Chairman
Director
Department of

EU to support food security and food aid programmes in Jordan

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan is discussing with the European Commission the means for EU support in food aid and food security programmes here. "The European Commission is intending to support the Kingdom's food security activities with a budget of two million ECUs (European Currency Units)," said Cornelius Houtman from the Food Security Unit at the European Commission.

He told the Jordan Times that the Commission and the Jordanian government are looking at means of cooperation in food security programmes here.

One such venture, the food security expert said, is Jordan's social productivity programme which has an implicit income-generating component stating that the activation of this programme implies that food security in Jordan will improve.

Food security encompasses safeguarding access to food, and boosting food production. "Food security, apart from the traditional concept of food production and stability, now also entails access to food," Mr. Houtman explained.

Today, food security also depends on technical, economic, political, and social factors, he stressed. All

these elements are connected at macro-and microeconomic levels and so each programme is designed to the needs of each developing country.

Such programmes envisage those who cannot produce or buy food to be able to do so, he said.

The food security expert added that "in certain circumstances food security means the generation of income and aiding people in increasing their food production." Commission policies in food security and food aid programmes are also concentrating on providing balanced diets of nutritional value.

Such activities require stable economic and political conditions. "Political stability is always important for food security," commented the expert adding that food security requires an environment in which farmers can produce and earn a living.

The civil war in Africa has destroyed the infrastructure for food production and income generation. In this manner, political stability is a precondition for food security, Mr. Houtman explained.

The European Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture will be collaborating together and part of the two million ECUs will be spent on institutional infrastructure such as the

financing of an animal health centre and a diagnostic lab. This, said Mr. Houtman, is directly related to the livelihood of poor farmers who own sheep and goats.

The Commission also aims at financing the extension of the agricultural training centre. Mr. Houtman noted that "the extension building already exists but does not have anything in it."

He explained that once this centre begins to operate it will be geared at training additional numbers of personnel and farmers.

Funding direct intervention activities targeting poor farmers is also being discussed with officials including those from the Ministry of Social Development, said the Commission official.

He highlighted that "the Commission is looking into projects which also involve women such as bee keeping, poultry, and milk production endeavours."

In the case of milk production, he said, farmers could either sell their products thus increasing their income, or use it for food security by storing it and consuming it later.

These plans are expected to take off the ground during the course of next year, he said.

Recognising that countries have different food aid

and food security requirements, the Commission decided to reorganise its food security programmes in 1996, the official said.

Food aid supplied as goods and the special instruments to support food security have been rationalised within an overall policy framework to achieve a single intervention strategy tailored to a particular region or country, the food security expert elaborated.

According to Mr. Houtman, the European Union food aid and security programmes cooperate heavily with non-governmental organisations in targeting people of low income in food deficit countries.

Mr. Houtman mentioned that collaboration takes place with United Nations organisations such as UNRWA which receives food aid that is being distributed to the special hardship cases among the refugees here.

"We at the Commission have decided to limit our assistance to countries who are in most need so as to monitor developments more efficiently," Mr. Houtman emphasised.

He said that in the past the Commission spread its assistance to so many countries but it could not give these projects the needed attention.

Egypt could lose one billion in tourist dollars from Luxor massacre

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt stands to lose a billion dollars in revenue after the massacre of holiday-makers in Luxor by militants which struck a heavy blow to its vital tourism industry, economic experts have said.

But industry officials, although reeling under waves of tour cancellations after the killing of 58 tourists in Luxor, were optimistic that tourism would bounce back and that long-term damage from the carnage would be limited.

"Tourism revenues for 1996-97 were around \$3.5 billion and it was possible revenues for 1997-1998 would have reached \$4 billion," said a European economist in Cairo.

But with this attack, my estimation is Egypt will lose around a quarter of that, or around a billion dollars," the economist, who asked not to be named, told AFP, adding that if a second attack occurred it would "break the industry."

The massacre at one of Egypt's top tourist sites on the west bank of the Nile came at the beginning of the lucrative winter season.

Munir Wissa, sales head at Egypt's largest tourism group Travco, said his company had received cancellations of more than 80 per cent of its tours for the rest of November.

A German travel agent, who asked not to be named, said cancellations from Germany, which sent 500,000 tourists to Egypt last year, were running at around 50 per cent.

The economist said the attack will have repercussions throughout the Egyptian economy, which had been boosted by the country's best ever tourism season in 1996-97 after rebuilding from damage caused by militants' five-year armed campaign against the government.

"Growth was supposed to be around six per cent for this year," but this would be lower than expected given the impact of a fall in tourism on the economy, the economist said.

He estimated that some

five million Egyptians, or nearly 10 per cent of the population, live directly or indirectly off tourism.

But Mr. Wissa said although the Luxor attack was "the worst ever and the effects will be worse than anything we've had since 1992, I think the effects will be short term."

"We are not closing down the country because of this," he said. Max Maurer-Loeffler, general director Cairo's Nile Hilton, echoed that optimism, saying the fallout from the attack "will not be long-lasting. I would say two or three months at the most," although those are the top months of Egypt's winter season.

"The main damage will be in the south and perhaps in the resorts of the Red Sea and Sinai where leisure tourism is highest. But I don't think Cairo will be affected," he said, adding that the Nile Hilton remained fully booked.

He said the Hilton was going "full steam ahead" with eight major building projects, including the opening of two new hotels on the Red Sea and Sinai over the next 18 months.

Mr. Wissa said his company expected cancellations to run at around 50 per cent for December and January, but took heart from the determination of many tourists to remain in the country.

"The day after the attack I got a call from a major American company saying they wanted to send a group of 200 tourists to Egypt in July next year. I was so astonished, I asked him if he had the right country," he said.

Samir Yussef, head of the business and management department at Cairo's American University, said the tourism industry was more resilient now than it was during the height of militant activity and that tourists were more "realistic" about the dangers.

"The important thing is that the Egyptian government shows that it is taking strong security action in order to reassure people," he said.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Make changes to your partnership, your home, your career. You've been confronting very tough issues. Now, make your choice. The decisions you make could affect your life for years to come. Do the obvious. Choose a life you love. You have the courage to make it happen.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) The rats are racing at warp speed today. This shows up in your job. You may have to apply what you're learning very quickly in a work-related situation. You always learn better through experience. Keep your wits about you today and you'll do just fine.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You don't have a moment to waste. You need to settle a matter pertaining to money and your true love. Or it could be money and one of your children. You've been haggling about this for days. You and the other person need to stop arguing. Make up your minds and get on with life.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You're in a tense situation. There are major planetary influences on Cancer, Libra, Capricorn and Aries. Ever notice you're attracted to those types? Sometimes the fur flies too, and this could be one of those days. Don't give up for a minute. You're winning!

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) The situation that's been plaguing you all week is finally going to be resolved, one way or the other. You're in the middle of a battle. It's getting more obvious what needs to be done next. You're stronger, but so is the opposition. Act quickly but not hastily. Be decisive but not inflexible.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) There are a lot of changes going on. Some of them affect your work and finances. It's time to get creative. Look at the possibilities you previously rejected. There's change coming to your home. It might as well be one that you plan, and control.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) An opportunity is still available. It looks like you've already met the contact you need. But the results are not quite in. You may feel threatened by recent changes. Don't get defensive. Instead, make the choice you've been thinking about. Don't put this off any longer.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Tomorrow, everything will change. The good news is that for you, it definitely changes for the better. You need to take action now. You can't afford to wait around and think about it any longer. Do that thing you've been hoping you would do — and be quick about it.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If there is something you'd like to rearrange, you'd better do it now. Tomorrow will be more difficult. You could make a new agreement pertaining to money. Another area most likely to see action is in your love life. Establish your independence now, or forever hold your peace.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) This is an amazing day. The current flurry of activity is about to come to a close. Your partnership might be changing. Something in your job needs modification. Get both of them straightened out immediately. You've thought about this long enough. Now get going.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is a very volatile day. Tomorrow will be much more stable. Make changes right now affect your work place and travel. Use new information to keep ahead of the competition. You're not very sure of yourself just yet, but that's OK. You're learning by doing.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) There's a lot of activity going on. Be very careful if you're driving in traffic. Also, watch your money. There are all kinds of secret matters to deal with, too. Don't worry about it; just trust your intuition. Everything, in due time, will become obvious.

Birthstone of November: Topaz — Tiger's Eye

Palestinian economy facing collapse: World Bank

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Palestinian economy could collapse if Israel does not quickly lift trade and travel restrictions against the occupied territories, the World Bank has warned in a report issued recently.

The 45-page report also insisted that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) needs urgently to reform its handling of economic matters.

The World Bank, working with the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute, painted a sobering picture of the state of the Palestinian economy, which it said remained "far below its potential" four years after the Oslo peace accords.

"The Palestinian economy is on a razor's edge between development and collapse," the report said. "Much will depend on the evolution of the peace

process."

The bank notably expressed alarm at a dramatic fall in family income and living standards in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, largely due to unemployment fuelled by Israeli security clampdowns.

The restrictions imposed following major attacks by Palestinians in Israel, barred tens of thousands of labourers from reaching jobs in the Jewish state for months at a time, hindered merchandise trade and sometimes prevented movement even between Palestinian towns and cities.

According to the report, real per capita consumption fell 15 per cent between 1992 and 1996 while unemployment rose to 28.4 per cent of the working-age population as of last year.

At the same time salaries

earned by Palestinians working in Israel fell from 25 per cent of the Palestinian gross domestic product in 1992 to six percent in 1996.

From 1993 to 1996, the bank said, the Israeli closures of the Palestinian areas caused \$2.8 billion in direct losses — twice the total amount of international aid provided to the PNA during the same period.

The bank called on Israel to honour its commitments under interim peace agreements to allow the opening of an airport and seaport in the Gaza Strip to facilitate trade.

In its report, the World Bank also criticised Palestinian President Yasser Arafat for bloating the size of his self-rule administration at the expense of providing adequate social services.

It said the size of the

PNA bureaucracy more than tripled from its inception in 1993 to 1996, growing from 22,000 to 75,000. The payroll rose during the same period from \$258 million to \$779 million.

But badly needed investment in Palestinian infrastructure during the three years never rose above \$70 million annually, less than two per cent of gross domestic product, compared to an average of four per cent in most developing countries.

The report regretted the weak development of the Palestinian private sector, which it attributed in part to the "climate of uncertainty" caused by the deadlock in the peace process since the nationalist right came to power in Israel in May 1996.

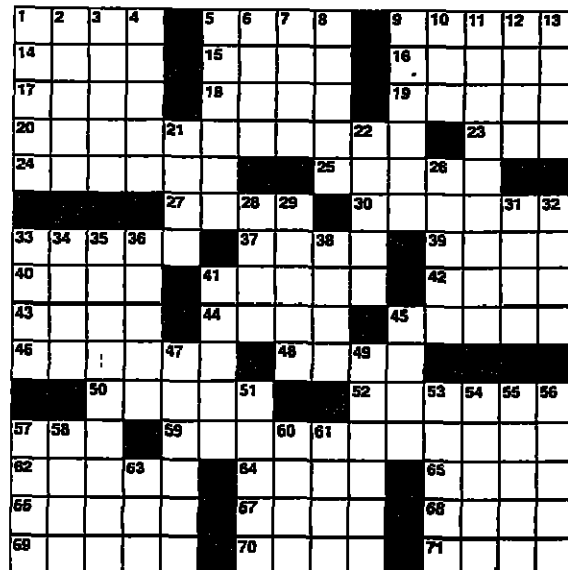
THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Mardi —
- 5 Greek letter
- 9 Very important
- 14 Network of nerves
- 15 Nobleman
- 16 "... nothing like ..."
- 17 Actor Sharif
- 18 Mine entrance
- 19 Mother-of-pearl
- 20 Wealth
- 23 Joke
- 24 Slow cargo
- 25 Dot
- 27 Desert dweller
- 30 Papas and Ryan
- 33 Bistros
- 37 Chopped
- 38 Calamitous
- 40 Cupid
- 41 A Curie
- 42 Distant
- 43 Norse goddess
- 44 Eve's son
- 45 Greek island
- 46 Arctic native
- 48 Troubadour love song
- 50 Visionaries
- 52 Blackboard item
- 57 Self
- 58 Woo, in a way
- 62 Even
- 64 Like the Sahara
- 65 Collection of Norse poems
- 66 Town in N.H.
- 67 Criticize harshly
- 68 Argued earnestly
- 69 Went astray
- 70 Villain's look
- 71 Turner and Koppel

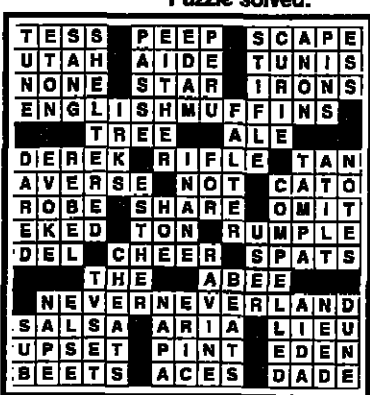
DOWN

- 1 Flagrant
- 3 Forgive
- 3 "... Of Two Cities"
- 4 Wait on
- 5 Safari member
- 6 Inventor James
- 7 Stumble
- 8 Voices
- 9 Mien



by Don Johnson

Puzzle solved:



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Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasbergen



"I got a vacuum cleaner for my first anniversary. I used it to pick up the pieces of my shattered romantic illusions."

JUMBLE.

Unscramble these four jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TYDIT

ARREM

OURSEA

RECRON

Answer here:

Yesterday's Jumbles: FRAME TAWNY PRIMED LATEST

Answer: The result of spending a fortune on workouts — LEAN TIMES

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Hazel Arnold and Mike Angleton

There goes our night out

WHAT PLUMBING WORK CAN DO TO THE FAMILY BUDGET.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer:

(Answers tomorrow)

IAF names Kipketer and Jones Athletes of Year

MONACO (AFP) — Denmark's 800m world record holder Wilson Kipketer and U.S. sprint queen Marion Jones were Friday named by the International Athletic Federation (IAF) as 'Athletes of the Year'.

Primo Nebiolo, president of the IAF, an offshoot of the Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF), announced the winners at a special gala evening after the two easily topped a 2,000-strong poll of media and athletics specialists.

He also handed over a special merit award to athletics legend Carl Lewis, who flew in specially from Texas.

The incomparable Lewis, winner of nine Olympic and eight World Championship gold medals and who is retiring at the age of 36 after a star-studded career spanning almost two decades, was visibly moved by his award.

"I have no regrets, just fine memories," he told his audience, adding he would now "increase my involvement in entertainments."

Regarding his retirement, Lewis, who memorably grabbed gold in the 100m, 200m, 4 x 100m and long jump in the Los Angeles Games in 1984, insisted that "I've made my final decision."

And he joked that Cuba's Ivan Pedroso, the reigning long jump world champion, now had the field virtually to himself, saying: "I can tell Ivan, who is here tonight, that he will certainly be world champion in 1999."

On the track, Kenyan-born Kipketer, 24, is now the name on everyone's lips after an astonishing season in which he won everything up for grabs, finishing with the overall title at the IAAF Grand Prix Final.

But that was merely the cherry on the cake for the man who has not tasted defeat at the distance since the 1995 Grand Prix Final following a season in which he recorded 12 victories in 12 starts.

Winning the gold medal at the world championships in Athens last August was only one of several highlights as Kipketer set world indoor records twice at the Paris world indoor championships in March and three outdoor world marks in Stockholm, Zurich and



American sprinter Marion Jones (R) and Denmark's 800 metres recordsman Wilson Kipketer (L) of Monaco are named athletes of the year by the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) in Monte Carlo. Jones and Kipketer pose with their trophies after the IAAF award ceremony gala (Reuters photo)



Nine-time Olympic gold champion Carl Lewis (R) of the United States is congratulated by Prince Albert (L) of Monaco as he received an award for his legendary career during the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) award ceremony gala. At center is Primo Nebiolo, the President of the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) (Reuters photo)

Cologne in the final weeks of the season.

He further distinguished himself in turning in three sub 1min 42sec performances, eight at below 1:43 and 11 under 1:44 across the season, an unparalleled feat.

The 21-year-old Marion Jones meanwhile heralded a new era in sprinting at last summer's World Championships in Athens when she claimed gold in

the 100 metres in the absence of 30-year-old Gail Devers, who was injured.

The event will long be remembered for its chaotic finish as race organisers first gave the win to Ukraine's Zhanna Pintusevich before television screens suddenly confirmed Jones had edged her

at the line in a personal best of 10.83sec, the Ukrainian timing 10.85sec.

Jones, who had to com-

pete with a screw in her left leg after she broke it twice last year, had previously starred at basketball with the University of North Carolina, quitting athletics before finally deciding it was the sport for her.

She came back with a bang by winning the U.S. Championship with the fastest run of her life at 10.90 and then ran 10.83 to grab glory in Athens.

Anti-mine activist to join final Olympic torch relay

TOKYO (AFP) — Chris Moon, an amputated British crusader against antipersonnel mines, will be one of the final torch relay runners at the Nagano Winter Olympics opening ceremony, a Japanese producer said Saturday.

Moon, 35, has accepted the task offered at the recommendation of a Japanese group supporting refugees, according to Keita Asari, the chief producer of the February 7 ceremony.

"I hope his appearance will help strengthen calls for world peace," Asari said.

Moon joined a non-governmental group calling for a total ban on antipersonnel mines after retiring from the Royal Army, the producer said.

He had his right arm and right leg amputated in March 1995 when he stepped on a mine during a mine-sweeping operation in Mozambique, Asari added.

But Moon has since managed to finish the London marathon with artificial limbs in a time of five hours 39 minutes. Last April, he also completed a marathon over more than 200 kilometres across the Sahara.

Asari said he planned to use at least five final relay runners to hand the Olympic torch to two runners, who will climb a set of stairs to the bottom of the cauldron.

The cauldron will then be set alight by Albertville Olympic women's figure skating silver medalist Midori Ito of Japan, according to earlier plans unveiled by Asari and his group of producers.

World Cup qualifiers Australia hold on for draw in Tehran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Australia held on for a 1-1 draw in the first leg of their World Cup play-off against Iran here on Saturday to give the Socceroos the edge in the return leg on November 29 in Melbourne. Harry Kewell opened the scoring for Terry Venables' Australian team in the 18th minute, but Iran responded strongly and equalised five minutes before half-time through Khodad Azizi.

Aussie keeper Mark Bosnich pulled off a string of fine saves in the second half as Iran piled on the pressure, but the draw leaves the Socceroos as favourites to become the last of the 32 qualifiers at next year's finals in France. Australia started brightly in front of 128,000 fans in the Azadi Stadium, repeatedly breaking through a nervous Iranian defence in a frenetic opening quarter hour. But following Kewell's well-taken goal after 18 minutes, a left-footed drive from an angle on the right after taking a pass from Mark Viduka, Iran responded strongly,

passing the ball around with confidence. Socceroos goalkeeper Mark Bosnich kept his side ahead with good saves. Ali Daei swivelled and shot in the box but Bosnich managed to keep the ball out on 26 minutes.

Mehdi Mehdavi had a great chance 10 minutes later when his fierce shot was palmed into the air by Bosnich before bouncing on the crossbar to safety.

Then came the equaliser from Asian player of the year Azizi five minutes from the break. The ball was floated in and Mehdavi crossed from the right for Cologne's Azizi to knock home from six yards just inside the keeper's right hand post.

Minutes after the break, Daei tested Bosnich with a superb header but the Aussie keeper palmed the ball over the bar to safety. Then came further saves from Bosnich and the Australians held firm to leave themselves favourites to win the tie and qualify for their first finals since 1974.

Bulls win in OT; Spurs lose

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina (AP) — Charlotte gained its first comeback victory of the season Friday night as Glen Rice powered a fourth-quarter surge that lifted the Hornets to a 119-102 victory over the Miami Heat.

Rice, held to five points in the first half, finished with 26, including 13 in the last 6:15 as the Hornets improved to 7-3, the best start in franchise history.

All six of Charlotte's previous victories had come after the Hornets built leads after three quarters, but this time they rallied from a 91-87 deficit in the final seven minutes and outscored Miami 32-11 down the stretch.

Knicks 104, Wizards 82: In Landover, Maryland, Larry Johnson scored 23 points and New York used a big second quarter to hand Washington its fourth straight loss.

Ewing had 14 points and 10 rebounds for the Knicks, who have won six straight and 21 of 22 against Washington.

Wizards forward Chris Webber, returning after a three-game absence with back spasms, scored 15 points and Rod Strickland added 14. Washington is the only Eastern Conference team that is winless at home (0-4).

Cavaliers 103, Timberwolves 80: In Minneapolis, Wesley Person scored 22 points, Shawn Kemp had 19 and Cleveland dealt Minnesota its third straight home loss.

Fans at the target centre booed the home team, whose two previous home losses were at least competitive — an overtime defeat against the Washington Wizards and a loss at the buzzer to the San Antonio Spurs.

The Wolves, who entered the game ranked third in the NBA in scoring, posted their lowest total of the season. Chris Carr scored 19 points and Kevin Garnett had 18, but Stephon Marbury was held to four points and three assists.

Celtics 101, Nets 93: In Boston, the Celtics avenged a loss to New Jersey that broke its four-game winning streak and beat the Nets behind 24 points and 12 rebounds from Antoine Walker.

Tyus Edney and Greg Minor came off the bench to score 12 points each and Ron Mercer, another substitute, added 11 for Boston, which didn't win its sixth game last season until Dec. 30 when it already had 21 losses en



Seattle Sonic Vin Baker (42) slams the ball over the San Antonio Spurs' David Robinson during first period play at Key Arena in Seattle. The Sonics dominated the first half leading 60-37 at the break (Reuters photo)

route to a 15-67 record.

The Nets were led by Chris Gatling with 22 points and Kendall Gill and Sam Cassell with 14 each.

Supersonics 94, Spurs 74: In Seattle, Vin Baker scored 22 points and Gary Payton added 17 points and 14 assists as Seattle held San Antonio to a season-low point total.

Seattle raced to a 36-16 lead after one quarter and the Spurs pulled no closer than 17 the rest of the way.

David Robinson, the NBA's leading scorer, was held to nine points on 4-for-12 shooting. He sat out the final 16 minutes of the game and failed to score in double figures for just the ninth time in 574 career games.

Monty Williams led San Antonio with 13 points and Cory Alexander had 10, they were the only Spurs to score in double digits.

Grizzlies 99, Nuggets 96: In Vancouver, British Columbia, Shafer Abdul-Rahim scored 28 points and Vancouver rallied to avoid becoming the first team to Denver this season.

The Nuggets, who have yet to win under rookie

coach Bill Hanzlik, have lost a franchise record 10 straight to start the season. They remain the NBA's only winless team.

Denver, which led by as many as 15 points, began unravelling late in the third quarter.

Vancouver outscored the Nuggets 22-12 over the final 12 minutes.

Bulls 111, Clippers 102, 2 OT: In Los Angeles, Michael Jordan scored 49 points, including all nine of Chicago's points in the second overtime, to lead the Bulls to their first road victory of the season.

The Clippers, losing their eighth straight game, missed all six of their shots and failed to score in the second extra period.

Jordan scored the Bulls' final nine points in regulation and their last four in the first overtime, bringing Chicago from behind on both occasions.

Luc Longley had 22 points and 17 rebounds for Chicago, and Dennis Rodman added 10 points and 14 rebounds. Lamond Murray led Los Angeles, whose record fell to 1-11, with 24 points.

Compagnoni dominates giant slalom

PARK CITY, Utah (AFP) — Italy's Deborah Compagnoni continued her overwhelming domination of the giant slalom discipline on Friday when she won her sixth in a row — and her second of the season — in commanding fashion.

The 26-year-old Olympic champion shrugged off poor visibility in the second leg to post an unbeatable 2min 52.60secs on the CB piste which will be used in the 2002 Olympics.

Compagnoni, who has not been beaten in a giant slalom since January 3, 1996 in Maribor, Slovenia (she finished second to Martina Ertl), led home Alexandra Meissnitzer (2:56.01) by a huge 3.41secs.

Norway's Andrine Flemmen claimed her first career podium by finishing third in 2:56.46, ahead of Swiss Sonja Nef (2:56.57) and fifth-placed Birgit Heeb of Liechtenstein (2:56.90).

German Katja Seizinger looked on-course for a podium place, but lost control in the heavy snowfall of the second run and skied off the course.

Teammate Ertl earned the day's best German showing with sixth on 2:57.17.

The Italian heads the overall standings with 214 points followed by Ertl with 170 points and Meissnitzer with 156.

Alberto Tomba, the sport's dominant personality, is hoping to be fit after a bout of back pain forced him to skip the second leg of the men's giant slalom on Thursday.

The 30-year-old Italian is aiming to use this World Cup season to prepare for his final career Olympics at Nagano in February.



Martina Ertl of Germany crashes into a gate for the second-fastest time in the field during the first heat of the World Cup giant slalom in Park City. She had a time of 1:27.67 (Reuters photo)

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL: 634144	CINEMA TEL: 634144	CINEMA TEL: 699238	CINEMA TEL: 677420	CINEMA TEL: 079 33430	CINEMA TEL: 079 33430	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 625155
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				SLEEP WALKERS			Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas
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Qualifiers hold on for Tehran

passing the ball and with some success. The goalkeeper, who had been in the goal for the last 10 minutes, managed to keep the ball out of the net. The goalkeeper, who had been in the goal for the last 10 minutes, managed to keep the ball out of the net. The goalkeeper, who had been in the goal for the last 10 minutes, managed to keep the ball out of the net.

Spurs lost



Vin Baker 42 claims the ball over the top. David Robinson, Spurs first pick, was in the goal. The Spurs goalkeeper, who had been in the goal for the last 10 minutes, managed to keep the ball out of the net.

Sports

Southwest Asian Games

Jordan eliminated from tennis, wrestling and badminton competitions

By Aileen Bannayan in Amman and Jordan Sports Media reporters in Tehran

JORDANIAN ATHLETES continued a string of negative results on the second day of competition at the 1st Southwest Asian Games currently underway in Tehran, Iran, with 12 countries competing in 17 sports events.

Jordan was eliminated from the wrestling competition after Pan-Arab Games medalist Abdul Hakim Abu Sneh lost 7-6 to Turkmenistan. He had lost 14-2 to Kyrgyzstan on the first day.

"I think I lost due to many unforced errors which I could have avoided had I been more experienced," a disappointed Abu Sneh told reporters after his defeat.

"Although we did well at the Pan-Arab Games, Asian levels are far better," he added.

In tennis, Ahmad Al Hadeed showed an improved form in losing to Kuwait's Adel Shatti.

Hadeed was leading 6-4, 6-5 as he held serve in the second set. However, Shatti broke his serve and went on to win the second set and concluded the match by a 6-0 third set win.

Jordan had lost the opening team tennis matches 2-0 to Iran and Tajikistan. However, things could not have gone better with the team missing the country's current top tennis players, Faris and Laith Azzouni who were unable to join the team for personal reasons.

With Al Hadeed the only player left and the team event requiring two players at the least, team manager Mazen Hatamleh was registered as player and took a heavy beating 6-0, 6-0 against Iran and Tajikistan and pulled out against Kuwait.

Jordan also lost all singles matches in the badminton event and the team will be returning to Amman Sunday alongside the wrestling team.

The coach of the fencing team will also return for personal reasons, leaving behind player Amer Natour who has not yet started his event.

Meanwhile, the organising committee promised to look into Jordan's request of keeping the marathon for which only a handful of athletes have turned up.

Jordan also requested the organisers to hold the 10,000 metres on the third day of the athletics event in order to enable Awwad Sreyes to take part in the 5,000 metres on the first day.

Officials of the boxing team, which includes five medal winners at the Pan-Arab Games, said they would raise the issue of disregarding international regulations in the event.

Jordan's head coach Hani Amer expressed his surprise at the boxing bouts having three rounds when the international regulations stipulate that there should be five.

In athletics, Arab-Games gold medalist Fakrudin Fuad was due to arrive in Tehran Saturday morning after he was given the go-ahead by physicians treating his recent spinal injury.

Open to men's teams only, the Nov. 19-28 Games have brought together athletes from Saudi Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Oman, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Yemen, Jordan and Iran.

Jordan's 37-member delegation comprises 19 athletes competing in 8 events: Athletics, boxing, fencing, badminton, tennis, wrestling, weightlifting and judo.

The games also include basketball, karate, table tennis, soccer, handball, taekwondo shooting and swimming.

The organising committee cancelled cycling and gymnastics in which Jordan was to have competed.

Unable to cover air-fare, many Jordanian federations opted to stay away from the Games. Among the Kingdom's declining federations are equestrian, handball, basketball, volleyball, shooting and table tennis.

However, in an effort to increase the Kingdom's competitive chances, the Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) sponsored excellent players by paying for medal-winning athletes at July's Pan-Arab Games, while the rest of the participating federations covered their own expenses.

Jordan took a total of 40 medals, including 10 gold, 8 silver and 22 bronze medals to finish fifth among the 19 participating countries gaining more gold medals in Beirut than in the past seven Pan-Arab Games altogether, and capping the best Jordanian participation since the event was first held in 1953.

Twelve medal-winners are included in the delegation including Fakrudin Fuad and Tareq Najjar (athletics), Mousa Khalaf (judo), Mohammad Abu Khadijeh, Ayman Nadi, Kamal Abdul Hamid, Khalidoun Abdul Hamid and Basel Hindawi (boxing), Abdul Hakim Abu Sneh and Ismail Sheikh (wrestling), Ayed Khawaldeh (weightlifting), and Amer Natour (fencing).

Only three of the eight federations participating in the Tehran Games were impressive in Beirut.

The boxing, athletics and weightlifting teams earned five medals each while the wrestlers took four. Judo and fencing earned a medal each.

Others like badminton and tennis who have already been eliminated from competition, were not seriously tested in competition recently and their competitive form was unknown prior to the Tehran Games.

On the other hand, some of the declining federations had impressive results at the Pan-Arab Games like the gold medal-winning soccer team and table tennis who took two bronze medals.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

IAAF to form 'Golden League'

OSLO (AFP) — Athletics' four prestigious "Golden Four" meetings in Oslo, Zurich, Brussels and Berlin, are to form an "IAAF Golden League" alongside meets in Rome, Paris and Monte-Carlo, a spokesman for the Oslo leg said here Friday. "We are very happy to be invited to take part in a series of such exclusive events," said Tom Fremstad of Bislett Alliansen, the organisation which deals with the Oslo event. Fremstad said prize money of \$1 million will be on offer for athletes winning their specialised event, with "Golden League" world records each worth \$50,000.

Galarraga signs with Braves

ATLANTA (AFP) — Andres Galarraga, unhappy the Colorado Rockies would not offer him a three-year guaranteed contract, signed a three-year contract worth \$24.75 million to join the Atlanta Braves. Galarraga, 36, led the National League at batting in runs the past two seasons and will replace Fred McGriff at first base for the perennial title.

contenders. McGriff and his \$5 million 1998 contract were traded to Tampa Bay on Tuesday. Galarraga was aided by playing baseball in the high altitude at Denver and in a ballpark beloved by batters. He hit 318 with 41 home runs and 140 RBI this year, finishing seventh in the NL in batting and third in homers. Galarraga set career highs and club records in 1996 when he had 47 homers and 150 RBI, the most by a National Leaguer since 1962. Nicknamed the "Big Cat," Galarraga turned his career around during five years in Colorado. In 1993, his first season with the Rockies, he hit a career-best 370 with 22 homers and 98 RBI.

Fulham climb higher

LONDON (AFP) — The "Fulham revival" rolled on here Friday when the London club climbed to eighth place in the English second division — their highest position since Kevin Keegan and Ray Wilkins arrived at Craven Cottage two months ago — after scoring a 3-0 victory over Gillingham.

Metz back on top as first title beckons

PARIS (AFP) — Unfashionable Metz went back to the top of the French first division on Friday with a 2-1 home win over Toulouse which left them one point clear of Marseille and two ahead of reigning champions Monaco.

Monaco ensured they grabbed third spot with a fine 3-0 win against Paris Saint Germain, who drop to fourth, three points behind the leaders.

Marseille, who had gone clear a week ago with a 4-0 thrashing of Auxerre, conceded pole position after their 2-0 loss at Strasbourg on Thursday to leave the door open for Metz, who have never won the championship, to take advantage.

And the northerners, who were top for most of Sep-

tember and October, duly did so as goals from Vladan Lukic in the 25th minute and a Robert Pires penalty eight minutes from the end cancelled out a Joel Tiehi strike for the visitors, who had Nicolas Pavot dismissed after barely half an hour.

Metz are now well-placed to dream of a long-awaited title as in the past ten seasons, the side leading at the midway point has gone on to lift the crown.

Bordeaux are fifth one point behind PSG but will be kicking themselves for missing the chance to move up three places after losing 1-0 at promoted Chateauroux, for whom Nicolas Weber scored the only goal on 66 minutes.

It was Bordeaux's first

defeat since September 5.

The win took undersized Chateauroux out of the bottom four, a point clear of 1995 champions Nantes, who crashed 3-0 at fellow strugglers Rennes.

Cannes remain bottom on 14 points but boosted their

chances of survival by beating Lyon 1-0.

Strasbourg's surprise win over Marseille still left them in the bottom six but provided a tonic prior to next week's UEFA Cup clash with Inter Milan.

Request for Proposals Training Services

The Water Quality Improvement and Conservation Project at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation invites qualified Jordanian firms to submit proposals for offering the following advanced computer training courses by trainers certified by Microsoft and Oracle respectively to teach the following courses:

1. Administering MS Windows NT 4.0
2. Support MS Windows NT Core Tech
3. Internetworking on MS TCP/IP
4. Supporting MS Windows NT - Enterprise Networking
5. Supporting MS System Mgt Server 1.2
6. Core Tech of MS Exchange Server Oracle 7.0 courses

1. Develop Complex Data Models & Design Databases
2. Oracle 7 Database Administration
3. Oracle 7 Backup and Recovery
4. Oracle 7 Performance Tuning Workshop
- Lotus Notes 4.5 courses
1. Basic & Advanced Lotus Notes Administration
2. Advanced Users training

The bidders proposals should include: course outline, certified trainers qualifications and certificates, venue of training, previous experience, and cost.

Novotna, Spirlea win to complete semifinal pairings

NEW YORK (AP) — A cool and calm Irina Spirlea survived an upset bid by Mary Joe Fernandez to join Jana Novotna in the semifinals of the season-ending Chase Championships.

Spirlea, the No. 8 seed from Romania, fought off three match points in 10th game of the match before defeating Fernandez 5-7, 6-2, 7-5 Friday night at Madison Square Garden.

Earlier, the second-seeded Novotna ousted Arantxa Sanchez Vicario 6-4, 3-6, 6-1.

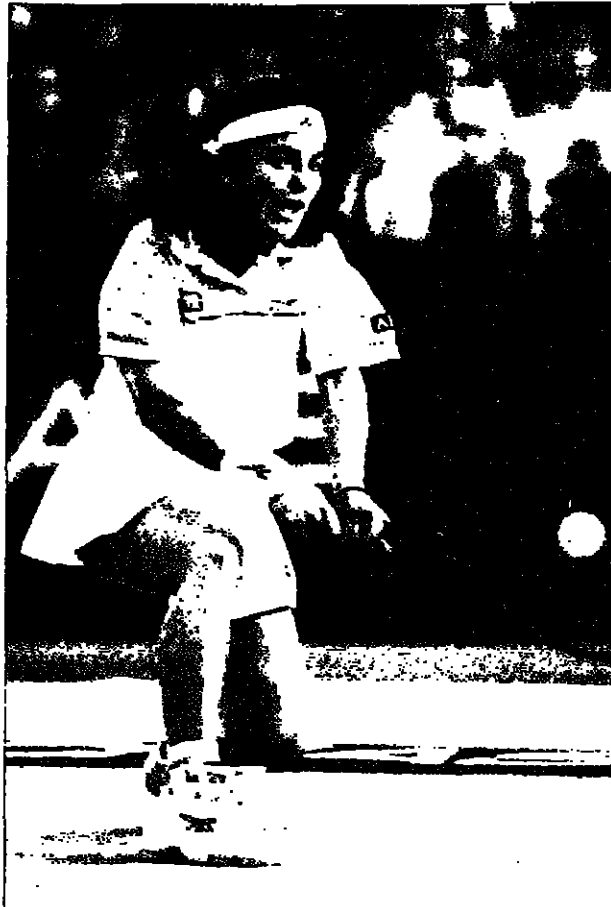
Spirlea and Novotna will meet in one of the semifinals, while No. 7 Mary Pierce takes on her French Fed Cup teammate, Nathalie Tauziat, in the other.

Spirlea probably should have wrapped up the victory long before she did, two hours and seven minutes after they began play. The Romanian, best known for her bump with Venus Williams at the U.S. Open, led 4-1 in the opening set, only to have Fernandez, a right-hander from Miami, win six of the next seven games.

The eventual winner had four-game runs in both the second and third sets. In the middle set, the two held serve through the first four games before Spirlea leveled the match.

Fernandez took a 5-3 lead in the third set and appeared ready to continue her remarkable run through a sea of seeded players. After Spirlea held in the ninth game, pulling to 5-4, Fernandez, the last remaining American in the tournament, won the first two points.

On the next point, she attempted to serve and volley, moving to the net behind a strong serve. But Spirlea rifled the return



Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario returns a shot from the Czech Republic's Jana Novotna in their quarterfinal round match of the Chase Championships at New York's Madison Square Garden (Reuters photo)

right at Fernandez's body, and she ended up netting the volley.

Still, she reached match point at 40-30, then two more in the next four points, each time, Spirlea came up with a winner.

"She wasn't so aggressive so I took the chances," Spirlea said. "I was pretty cool."

The team went out of Fernandez's game after that, winning only one point in the next two games.

"She came up with the big shots in the end," Fernandez said.

who could dig deeper. "You always trip to come up with something new, and that's sometimes not good," Novotna said. "The most important thing is just to know and remember how you beat the player and just stick to your game."

Novotna quickly jumped out front, breaking her opponent in the opening game of the match. Another break in the fifth game put her up 4-1 before Sanchez Vicario won the next three games to pull even.

No problem for the Czech. She broke Sanchez Vicario once again, this time at 30, then held to capture the opening set.

The Two have played too long and too often, and they are too good for one to run away from the other, the second set was Sanchez Vicario's turn.

Chasing down seemingly every ball, always returning one more ball for Novotna to hit, Sanchez Vicario got only one service break, that coming in the fourth game. But it was all she needed as she lost only two points on her serve the rest of the set to even the match at one set apiece.

Novotna, whose nerves had caused her as many problems as the play of her opponents, this time calmly reved up her game.

She began by holding serve at 15. Then, after Sanchez Vicario matched her, Novotna began her charge into Saturday's semifinals, dominating the next five games.

In the night's first match, Tauziat and Alexandra Fusai of France advanced to the doubles final when Manon Bollegraf of the Netherlands suffered a pulled calf muscle in her left leg, and she and partner Nicole Arendt of the United States, were forced to retire with the score at 6-3, 3-2.

Novotna and Sanchez Vicario are two veterans who know each other's game well. They are old friends who once were doubles partners. And they are old foes, facing each other for the 18th time.

Novotna, who has won the last four meetings, has beaten Sanchez Vicario 10 times overall.

There were no surprises when they took to the bright blue carpet, no new strokes they could unveil. As always when these two face each other across the net, it was who's game was on, who was moving better.

Boxing promoters begin unification talks

NEW YORK (AFP) — Promoters Don King and Dino Duva began talks here Friday to try and reach terms that would allow Evander Holyfield and Britain's Lennox Lewis to fight for a unified heavyweight crown.

Lewis manager Frank Maloney and European promoter Panos Eliades joined Duva, Lewis' U.S. promoter, at the meeting with King as the two sides wrangle over money for reunifying a crown that was divided in 1992.

Duva characterized King's position by saying he sought "Lennox's first born and mother" as payment.

Holyfield beat Michael

Moorer two weeks ago in Las Vegas to claim the World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation titles.

Lewis stopped Poland's Andrew Golota in 95 seconds last month in Atlantic City to retain his World Boxing Council crown.

A Lewis-Holyfield fight would likely be staged next April, provided rival television networks Showtime, which backs Lewis, and HBO, which backs King and Holyfield, can come to terms on who shows what when.

Duva said after the Holyfield-Moorer fight he would expect Holyfield will get the lion's share of a \$35 million total purse, but

he still wants the fight if the terms are reasonable.

This is a busy time for King.

In addition to awaiting for July's first chance to reinstate banished Mike Tyson, King has a pending criminal trial, litigation

upcoming with fighters

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African Frans Botha plus a

suit in England against promoter Frank Warren.

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♥ A J 9 5
♦ A 9 5
♣ K 6 5

WEST
♠ J 8 7 4
♥ 10 7 6
♦ 6 5 3
♣ A 8 7 2

EAST
♠ Q 10 9 8
♥ Q 2
♦ Q J 10 8
♣ J 10 4

SOUTH
♠ A K
♥ K 8 4 3
♦ K 7 4 2
♣ Q 9 3

The bidding:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
1♣ Pass 10 Pass
20 Pass 3NT Pass
40 Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead: Four of a

It might seem that all South needed to land the heart game was a successful finesse for the lady and a 3-2 break. However, the contract was made despite the fact that the finesse was destined to lose, and there was nothing the defenders could do about it.

The auction is not without interest. Since North can raise hearts with only three-card support, South's leap to three no trump seemed to be that possibility. With good four-card support, North's correction to the suit game despite having no ruffing value has our unqualified endorsement.

West led a low spade, taken in the closed hand with the king. Declarer chased the ace of spades, crossed to the ace of diamonds and ruffed a spade in hand. After cashing the king of diamonds, declarer exited with a diamond to East's jack. The defender could do no better than continue with the queen, ruffed on the table.

A club to the queen was taken with the ace, and West returned the suit to dummy's king. Declarer exited with a club, taken by East's jack. At this point declarer was down to A J 9 of trumps in dummy and K 8 4 in hand. With the lead in the East hand, declarer was able to claim the last three tricks. Note that declarer made four hearts without taking a finesse, or drawing even a single round of trumps!

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Jerusalem Waqf protests Israeli takeover of Palestinian house

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel's confiscation of a Palestinian-owned house in Jerusalem's Old City following the murder of a Jewish settler prompted protests from the Islamic authorities here Saturday.

"The Israeli government is using security as a pretext to reinforce Jewish settlement" of Jerusalem, said the director of the Office of Islamic Endowments (Waqf) in Jerusalem, Adnan Hussein.

"This measure will be

counterproductive, because it will encourage the settlers to new provocations," he told AFP.

Israeli police have seized the two-storey house near the place where the settler was killed Thursday and set up a guard post on the roof.

The settler activist who was killed, Gabriel Hirschberg, 26, was a student at a Talmudic (Jewish scriptural) seminary run by the extreme right-wing national religious group, Ateret Cohanim.

The group is dedicated to the Jewish takeover of Arab east Jerusalem and has bought up several dozen Arab homes there.

The Palestinian-owned home was confiscated by Israel "for security reasons" in 1969. It was taken over by Ateret Cohanim students who live in a neighbouring house in 1991.

But the settlers had to leave the house in 1994 following legal action by its Palestinian owners. It has remained empty since then

because the court asked the owners to rent it to Ateret Cohanim, a request they rejected.

Israel illegally occupied Arab east Jerusalem in 1967 and has moved in around 160,000 Jewish settlers.

The PNA wants to make Arab east Jerusalem the capital of their future Palestinian state.

Jerusalem is one of the issues the Israeli-Palestinian accords of 1993 left to so-called final-status talks on a comprehensive settlement.

Netanyahu says 'nucleus' of enemies out to get him

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Friday that the rebellion in his Likud Party had been organised by a small hardcore of enemies.

"I am the target of a small nucleus in the heart of my party which has not accepted the democratic mandate entrusted to me," Mr. Netanyahu told Israeli Television.

He accused his Likud opponents of "hypocrisy," saying, "The ones who claim in Israel or the world that they can't trust me are expressing disagreement with my policy."

According to the public television station journalists who interviewed Mr. Netanyahu, 15 of the 18 cabinet members have privately said they do not trust the prime minister.

In a bid to defuse a mutiny by leaders of his Likud bloc, Mr. Netanyahu

bowed Thursday to demands he form a commission to investigate irregularities at a recent party convention.

An opinion poll published Friday found that only 20 per cent of Israeli voters queried favoured Mr. Netanyahu remaining in power at the head of his current coalition of right-wing and religious parties until the next scheduled elections in the year 2000.

Forty-four per cent favoured holding immediate elections for a new parliament and prime minister.

Another 34 per cent favoured Mr. Netanyahu remaining prime minister but at the head of a national unity government grouping his Likud bloc with Labour and two per cent were undecided.

Asked by the Gallup organisation if they would support Mr. Netanyahu as the Likud candidate for

prime minister the next time elections are held, 60 per cent said no and 31 per cent said yes.

If elections were held today, 41 per cent said they would choose opposition Labour Party leader Ehud Barak to head the new government, versus 34 per cent for Mr. Netanyahu.

The poll, published in the *Maariv* newspaper, showed that while Mr. Netanyahu's bid to defuse the crisis may have failed to sway his Likud opponents, most voters think the rebellion against the prime minister will fail.

Asked what they believed would be the outcome of the latest crisis in Likud, 68 per cent said Mr. Netanyahu "would continue to serve in office as usual."

Only 22 per cent said Mr. Netanyahu would be ousted and 10 per cent had no opinion.

Jewish monument aims to mend Greek-Israeli relations

SALONICA (R) — Greece will unveil a monument on Sunday to the memory of some 50,000 Jews from this northern port who perished in Nazi concentration camps, in a move aimed at mending relations with Israel.

Government officials said honouring the Holocaust victims would help end a series of misunderstandings with Israel that have harmed ties and put pressure on Greece to prove it is not cultivating anti-Jewish feelings.

"It is an important event of historical memory but also a settlement of misunderstandings in communication damaging the credibility of the country [Greece] — something which is wrong and unjust," Culture Minister Evangelos Venizelos told reporters.

The monument will be on the intersection of two central Salonika avenues.

Dignitaries due to attend include Israel's Health Minister Yehoshua Matsa, and a U.S. Congressional delegation led by the Chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee Benjamin Gilman.

The monument will be unveiled by Greek President Costis Stephanopoulos with Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos and other senior officials present.

"Israel welcomes the decision of the Greek government to hold the unveiling of the monument to the Jewish martyrs," an Israeli government statement said.

Greece, which has close relations with most Arab states, was among the last Western nations to officially recognise Israel in the early 1990s, and has since been at odds with Tel Aviv several times over mostly trivial issues.

Among the most noted disputes was a refusal by former Greek Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias to attend the Auschwitz commemoration events in 1985 after Poland raised among others the flag of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with which Greece is at odds.

Greece was also upset by a recent Israeli-Turkish defence agreement. Athens has a long-standing feud with Turkey over territorial rights in the Aegean Sea and the divided island of Cyprus.

Salonika, described in the past as the "mother of Israel" and "second Jerusalem" once had the largest Sephardic community.

About 50,000 Greek Jews were killed in the gas chambers of Auschwitz and Birkenau during the 1941-44 Nazi occupation of Greece. Just over one thousand remain from a community numbering 80,000 at the turn of the century.

Salonika's Jewish history stretches back to the second century BC and St. Paul is known to have preached at its synagogue.



U.S. space shuttle Columbia's robot arm (right) releases the Spartan-201 satellite Friday above the Pacific Ocean. The space shuttle Columbia and her six-person international crew are on a 16-day mission that includes the deployment of a Spartan-201 satellite, several space walks and microgravity experiments (AFP photo)

Astronauts release faulty satellite, then can't grab it

Spacewalk may be performed to grab \$10m satellite by hand

CAPE CANAVERAL (AP) — Space shuttle Columbia's astronauts struggled in vain to capture a sun-watching satellite after the craft malfunctioned within moments of its release.

NASA quickly lost any chance of conducting solar observations with the satellite, now or later in the mission. The space agency still wanted the satellite back, however, for the trip home.

Mission control told the astronauts Friday that they might have to perform a spacewalk Sunday night to grab the 350kg satellite with their gloved hands. The crew's two designated spacewalkers trained before the flight for just such an emergency.

The orbital drama began a few minutes after astronaut Kalpana Chawla released the satellite.

Realising it wasn't turning the way it should, Ms. Chawla tried to grab the satellite with Columbia's 15-metre robot arm. But the arm would not latch onto the satellite, and when she pulled back on the arm, she inadvertently sent the craft into a slow spin.

Columbia stayed at a safe distance from the \$10 million reusable satellite, but within grabbing distance, as the two spacecraft zoomed around the world.

"We're trying the best we can," pilot Steven Lindsey assured mission control.

Ms. Chawla waited for the

grapple fixture on the satellite to face the robot arm before trying to latch onto it again. Mission control, meanwhile, debated what to do as the minutes slipped by.

After an hour, flight controllers instructed the six astronauts to give up, at least for the day. By that time, NASA had lost any chance of performing solar observations later in the flight — an internal clock shut down the pointing system for good 60 minutes after the satellite's release.

Commander Kevin Kregel pushed for more time as he tried to line up the two spacecraft, saying the satellite was close and easily accessible. But eventually, he had to stop chasing the satellite as the shuttle fuel reserves dwindled. He steered the ship away.

Ms. Chawla released the Spartan satellite — a 1.5-metre cube with the ends of a 3-metre telescope protruding from opposite sides — with ease. It was supposed to perform a pirouette within 90 seconds to demonstrate its systems were working, but never did.

"We plan to regrab," Ms. Chawla immediately informed mission control.

Flight rules dictate that the satellite be retrieved immediately if no pirouette is performed.

The cause of the malfunction was not immediately known.

Because the telescope door

opened following the satellite's release, engineers believe some systems were working, said mission control commentator Rob Navias.

"However, whether the satellite can right itself so that it can stop its rotational spin or whether or not it is a dead satellite in orbit is not known at this point," he added.

Spartan was supposed to observe for two days the sun's ionised outer atmosphere, known as the Corona, and the solar wind, the charged particles hurtling from the Sun. The solar wind can disrupt radio communications and power stations on earth.

If all had gone well, Columbia's U.S., Japanese and Ukrainian crew would have retrieved Spartan with the shuttle robot arm Sunday night and then geared up for a spacewalk Monday night to test equipment for the future international space station.

The 16-day mission ends Dec. 5.

Spartan was supposed to be released Thursday, but was delayed one day because of problems with another solar observatory, that one million miles away. The two spacecraft were supposed to make simultaneous measurements of the Sun so scientists could compare the results.

Spartan has flown several times before in space without any major problems.

Ms. Chawla, the first Indian-born woman in space, is making her first spaceflight.

Return of German, French envoys to Iran ends EU crisis

TEHRAN (AFP) — The return of German and French ambassadors to Iran on Saturday ended a seven-month crisis between Iran and Europe and should speed the normalisation of ties between Brussels and the new government of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami.

German Ambassador Horst Baechmann and his French counterpart Jean-Pierre Massot arrived back in Tehran after other European Union (EU) ambassadors returned Nov. 14 under an agreement between the Luxembourg EU presidency and Iran.

The EU states and Tehran had recalled their diplomats after German judges ruled in April that Iranian leaders were behind the killing of Kurdish Iranian activists in a Berlin restaurant in 1992.

The end of the dispute comes as part of a diplomatic drive by President Khatami's new government to solve the ambassadors' crisis and a host of other diplomatic problems inherited from Iran's previous harder-line government.

President Khatami's administration, in power since August, has pledged to ease tension with other countries and appears to want rapprochement with Europe to thwart a U.S. drive to isolate the Islamic Republic on charges of sponsoring international

terrorism and seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

The return of the ambassadors by itself does not signal a full normalisation of ties between the EU and Tehran. The EU member states and Iran have yet to determine the outcome of the "critical dialogue," which has characterised their relations since 1992, and was still in place when the ambassadors were recalled.

But the two sides "now will be able to begin discussing what will happen with the critical dialogue," which was suspended during the diplomatic crisis, a European diplomat in Tehran told AFP.

Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi said the return of the German and French ambassadors should permit the continuing development of relations between Tehran and Europe.

"We hope that with the return of the ambassadors, the process of development of relations can take its course again," Mr. Kharazi said in a statement to Iranian state television.

Mr. Kharazi also said the return of the ambassadors "showed Iran was right" in the dispute with Europe and confirmed Iran's "stability" in the region.

Iran's supreme spiritual Leader Ayatollah Ali

Khameni had demanded that the German ambassador be the last to return to Iran as a condition for ending the diplomatic crisis, which Tehran blamed Germany for provoking with its court decision. The EU originally rejected that condition as discriminatory and as a compromise it was agreed that the German ambassador should return last but would be accompanied by his French colleague. Iran announced Wednesday that its ambassadors will likewise be returning to their posts in EU countries.

Several European countries during the last seven months have complained of not having ambassadors in Tehran to work with President Khatami's more moderate government.

Iran has praised France for having mediated a solution to the crisis. Tehran said it had taken account of the support given by France and other Europeans to the French oil company Total, which recently defied U.S. sanctions threats to conclude a gas contract with Iran worth \$400 million.

The envoys' return comes as Tehran prepares to host a summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) next month, which the Iranian authorities hope will mark the normalisation of ties with the rest of the Islamic World.

Would-be mediators put plan to Sudanese opposition, government

KHARTOUM (AFP) — A group seeking to mediate an end to the Sudanese civil war has put a plan for national reconciliation to opposition leaders and government officials, a press report said Saturday.

Hussein Suleiman Abu Salih, a former foreign minister, heads the Popular Organisation for National Dialogue (POND), and said the steps "pave the way for national reconciliation."

according to the Al Rai Al Aam independent daily.

The paper said the initiative proposes a package of steps to be taken by both the government and the opposition to prepare for dialogue.

Recent talks between the Islamist government, which seized power in 1989, and the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army of John Garang ended in failure.

POND appealed to the government to declare a

general amnesty, release political detainees, remove from the statute books restrictive legislation and unfreeze opposition property.

It called on the opposition to welcome those steps when taken by the government and to halt an uprising against the government, followed by negotiations for a ceasefire and progress on deciding a way forward to national dialogue.

Salonika, described in the past as the "mother of Israel" and "second Jerusalem" once had the largest Sephardic community.

About 50,000 Greek Jews were killed in the gas chambers of Auschwitz and Birkenau during the 1941-44 Nazi occupation of Greece. Just over one thousand remain from a community numbering 80,000 at the turn of the century.

Salonika's Jewish history stretches back to the second century BC and St. Paul is known to have preached at its synagogue.

5 foreign aid workers kidnapped in Somalia

HARGEISA (R) — Unidentified gunmen have kidnapped five foreign aid workers in the self-declared Republic of Somaliland, an official said on Saturday.

Mohammad Farah Mohammad, Somaliland's "interior minister," told Reuters that five foreigners — four United Nations officials and a European Union (EU) representative — were snatched by gunmen on Friday afternoon in Eyl, northern Somaliland.

He said the kidnappers were probably after \$70,000 that the delegation was rumoured to be carrying to fund an environmental project in the area.

Somaliland, with a popula-

tion of around one million, declared itself independent in 1991 when the Somalia government collapsed and the country plunged into anarchy.

Mr. Mohammad named the EU representative as Dennis Cassidy and said two of the others worked for UNICEF, one for "a U.N. operations unit" and the other for habitat, the world body's agency responsible for the environment.

A spokeswoman for UNICEF said in Nairobi that "an incident has taken place," but could provide no other details.

Mr. Mohammad said the group had crossed into Somaliland from Ethiopia on

Friday to continue work on a project to try to stop locals from destroying woodlands in order to make charcoal.

Mr. Mohammad said the kidnappers were probably from one of two gangs vying for a bigger slice of the lucrative charcoal market.

While most of Somalia is divided by bloody, internecine fighting between clan-based factions, Somaliland has been largely at peace since 1991, but remains unrecognised by the rest of the world.

Somaliland covers the area of the former British Somaliland protectorate which merged with adjoining Italian Somalia in 1969 to form the Somali Republic.



Mandela on marriage to Graca: 'Whatever she decides, I'll obey'

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — President Nelson Mandela Friday evaded the question of marriage to his sweetheart, Graca Machel, telling journalists here: "Whatever she decides, I'll obey." "You see these days, it's not the men who take the initiative, it's the ladies," Mandela told a Foreign Correspondents' Association luncheon. "I don't think it's fair to ask me to answer that question. Ask the lady," Mandela, 79, has been publicly courting the 52-year-old widow of former Mozambican President Samora Machel since July last year but has been coy on the question of marriage.

Mickey Mouse is planning a comeback

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — One of the world's original cartoon stars, Mickey Mouse, is planning a television comeback in little over a year, Walt Disney announced on the 69th anniversary of the mouse's cinema debut. A weekly Mickey Mouse cartoon will be released for television in January 1999, the studio said. Created by Walt Disney himself, and using his own voice, Mickey Mouse made his film debut on Nov. 18, 1928 in New York in "Steamboat Willie," the first of more than 120 film roles.

Jackson's Debbie pregnant with 2nd child

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Pop superstar Michael Jackson has told Life magazine his wife Debbie Rowe is pregnant with their second child. Their first child, Prince Michael Junior, was born in February. His godparents are Elizabeth Taylor and Macaulay Culkin. Jackson, who wed Rowe last year in Australia, told Life that his work hurts his family life. "It's very hard," he said. "We haven't been able to spend time as a family. Not at all." He also maintained that his first wife Lisa Marie Presley — whose photo remains near his bedside — was sorry that she did not have a child during their brief marriage. "She regrets it," Jackson said. "She said so."

Did Lenin have a Swiss bank account?

GENEVA (AFP) — On a list of the owners of dormant accounts published by Swiss banks figures the name Vladimir Ulyanov, the real name of Lenin, it was learned in Basel. On the list of accounts untouched since 1945 is the name Vladimir Ulyanov of Zurich, corresponding to the germanised spelling of Vladimir Ulyanov. The Russian revolutionary theoretician once lived in Zurich. The account shows a credit balance of \$65.

Man falls off bridge for can of beer

LONDON (AFP) — Lovelorn Aaron Robbins tumbled 30 metres over a bridge after reaching for a can of beer, just minutes after police had talked him out of jumping off in a suicide bid. The 33-year-old threatened to kill himself after rowing with his girlfriend but was talked out of it. Moments later, he reached down for a beer but missed and fell. The Mirror tabloid daily reported. A police spokesman in Sunderland, northern England, said Robbins was "lucky to be alive."